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Illinois Decatur

General

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ANTEBELLUM DECATUR

&

Macon County
1816-1860



DECATUR, ILLINOIS

THE
ANTEBELLUM
DAYS OF
DECATUR
&
Macon County
DECATUR, ILLINOIS
1816-1860

Written and
Illustrated By

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PUBLISHED BY
THE HERITAGE COMMITTEE, INC.
DECATUR, ILLINOIS

In Honor of The Illinois Sesquicentennial

1968



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P R E F A C E

Residents of any community, particularly those who have spent their lives in one area, need to glance through the looking glass to the past to discover what people and circumstances evolved through the years to make their community what it is today. The results are oftentimes very fascinating for here unfolds a story of how an uninhabited area of American landscape is made into a city.

Decatur residents can find in the pages of this book the story of how a small village thrived during its ante-bellum days (before the Civil War) despite the hardships and privations it encountered. It tells how a few home-hungry families came into the vast interior of Illinois at a time when pioneers were pushing west in the hope of finding richer land at a cheaper price than they had left behind. Battling mosquitoes and poorly drained land they broke the sod, built log homes, etched roads through the tall grass and the mud, instigated small businesses, government, schools and churches in their efforts to survive and prosper.

Such was the grit and determination of our forefathers. From this Decatur grew, surviving depressions, wars, and disappointments, laying a stable foundation upon which the history of the last hundred years has been laid.

We dedicate this work to a better understanding of this valuable heritage. We acknowledge and are thankful for the resources of written materials which have been preserved by historians and trust they have been transmitted correctly.

Decatur, Illinois
(Oct., 1961)

Edith Brockway

We are also grateful to Otto Kyle for reading and correcting the manuscript.

About The Author

Author-illustrator Edith Brockway, although not an "old-timer" to Decatur, has been interested in local history since she moved here in 1956 with her family, Dr. Charles Brockway and three daughters, Ann, Joy and Kay.

She began work on Decatur research during her first year's residence, as a newspaper project (as she had done similarly back in Akron, Ohio). The results were published for several months in the now defunct DECATUR ADVERTISER.

Mrs. Brockway's articles deal with local history up until the time of the Civil War.

The Heritage Committee, Inc., of Decatur thanks the author for the gift of her work.

Many of the illustrations were drawn by Mrs. Brockway from actual photographs found in the resource materials listed in the bibliography on page 60. Others were based on historical materials and pictures of that period. The sketches of Stephen Decatur and the Wigwam were done by Marjorie Wilson, Decatur artist.

Mrs. Brockway writes free-lance feature articles for educational magazines (with photographs) including THE INSTRUCTOR, SCHOOL ARTS, ARTS AND ACTIVITIES and others. She has written, "Range Doctor" and "Land Beyond the Rivers," juvenile books.

CHAPTER 1

EARLY SETTLEMENT



Decatur is located in that vast territory explored and taken possession of by Father Marquette and Louis Joliet when they came up the Illinois River in the 1670's. Fascinated by the beauty of the new region into which they were entering, the men turned off the main river and followed the Sangamon for a distance before continuing their journey, little realizing that this land had already been claimed by the Spanish who considered it a part of Florida.

After going through French, then British hands, this land was conquered for Virginia by the successful exploits of George Rogers Clark, when he captured Kaskaskia and Vincennes. In 1784 this area was ceded to the United States as part of the Northwest Territory, then broken into five states—Indiana, Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan, and Illinois. In 1818 the present boundaries of Illinois were fixed and it became a state.

Its 35,000 population was scattered along the Illinois, Wabash, and Ohio rivers. The interior of the state was uninhabited, except for a few scattered Indian tribes. The Kickapoos were still in Central Illinois when the Sac and Fox remnants were in the northwestern part of the state. By 1832 most of these Indians moved on west and the land was left for white settlement.

Although the Decatur area was never a site of an Indian village, nor was it crossed by the more important Indian trails, it was used as a hunting and fishing ground. Even after the white man settled in the county, bands of Indians were frequently seen.

A few of the settlers were afraid of attack, but the only Indian raids ex-

perienced were made on their chickens and pigs. After one such raid, a group of men from the settlement along the Sangamon took out after a small band of Indians which had camped on Long Creek. They threatened to take their fire-arms away from them if they did not move out of the area. To this the Indians agreed: This was the last time they were seen in any number around Decatur.

The first house known to be built by white men within the present limits of Macon County was erected before 1816 by the Lorton brothers who operated the Indian trading post about eleven miles northeast of Decatur. They did a thriving business until about 1826, exchanging blankets, ammuniton, calico, rum and other articles with the Indians for furs.

The first permanent settlement in this area was started by Leonard Stevens. Around 1822 he built a home three miles northwest of Decatur near a stream which later was named for him. The Stevens' home was the voting place for District No. 2 of Shelby County before Macon County was laid out. Other settlers, including John Hanks, were attracted to the Stevens' site, and soon a cluster of cabins grew along the creek. This became known as the Stevens settlement.

South of the Sangamon river another settlement sprang up, established by the John Ward family. Other families that settled near the Wards were the Smiths, Warnicks, and the Austins. Relations between the two settlements were not always friendly, as the Wards were from the South and the Stevens from the North. Often blows were resorted to in settling disputes between them.

By 1828 this area was populated enough by white settlers to warrant a division of the larger counties into smaller ones. At that time, Shelbyville was the closest seat of justice and a long trip over rivers and muddy roads had to be made for every legal transaction in this region. A new county seat closer to the growing settlements was desperately needed.

Three men from the Ward settlement—Benjamin Austin, Andrew Smith and John Ward—made the trip to the state capital in Vandalia in January of 1829 to ask passage of an act dividing Shelby county and for the formation of a new county. Their efforts were successful as the act for forming Macon County was approved on January 19, 1829. It was cut from Shelby, DeWitt, Fiatt and Moultrie counties and was named for the Honorable Nathaniel Macon, a notable Congressman who had served in the House and Senate for thirty-three years.

CHAPTER 2

THE DEVELOPMENT OF DECATUR



After the formation of Macon County in January, 1829, the next step was the establishment of a location for the county seat. This task was not a simple one because both the Stevens settlement on the north, and the Ward settlement across the river wanted the site in their area. Arguments turned into fights over this issue. At one meeting a man was so badly beaten that he later died.

Several votes were taken and rescinded before a final settlement was made. On April 10, 1829, John Fleming, Jesse Rhodes and Easton Whitten were commissioned by legislative act to find a location. It was decided to lay out a twenty acre tract in the "15th section in township 16th North." This decision came after they "carefully and impartially viewed and examined the situation and convenience, likewise the advantages of the present and future population."

Soon after this meeting another was held in a blacksmith shop where William Warnick was elected sheriff along with three commissioners, Benjamin Wilson, Elisha Freeman, and James Miller. Since there was no public building in which to hold court, the home of John Ward was selected for a meeting place until a court house could be built.

The first county commissioners' court was held May 19, 1829, and the necessary officers selected. Daniel McCall was appointed county clerk and Benjamin Austin was appointed county treasurer. One of the first acts of the new court was to levy a tax to provide for court expenses. Personal property such as slaves, pleasure carriages, distilleries, stock in trade, horses, mares, mules, cattle over three years old, watches and other personal property, except lawful firearms, was all taxed. License fees for opening any kind of merchandise business ranged from \$3 to \$5. Rates were established for ferries on the river and

total tax receipts for the first year totaled \$109.32½.

In selecting a name for the new town, Decatur was chosen in honor of Stephen Decatur—a popular hero. Although killed in a duel in 1820, young Commodore Decatur—called the “Bayard of the seas”—was well known in his time for his daring exploits in the capture of Tripoli and freeing the sea lanes from piracy.

By July, 1829, the town of Decatur was surveyed and laid out by Benjamin Austin, for which he was paid \$25. The twenty acre tract was bounded on the north by Prairie street, as that was the edge of the prairie; on the south by Wood, it being the edge of the woods; on the east by Water which edged a large pond; and on the west by Church. In the center was a square, later named Lincoln Square, which was intersected by an East and West Main street and a North and South Main street.

To publicize the birth of a new town, a sale of lots on July 10, 1829 was advertised in the Vandalia newspaper. Sale day attracted few buyers even with John McMennamy present to cry out the sales. The first lot was sold to John Manley who paid \$53.50 for the northwest corner of the square. A second lot was purchased on the southeast corner for \$12. James Renshaw spurred civic activity by erecting the first store and tavern just off the square on Main street. Gradually the town began to take shape.

By the spring of 1834 Decatur had 11 buildings; seven of which were family dwellings, two store buildings, one court house and a jail about which historians describe as being constructed with brick that could have been “picked to pieces with a darning needle.”

Decatur became a municipality under the town law in 1836, with Richard Oglesby as the first president of the board of trustees. By this time a dam had been built across the Sangamon river by David Allen, who erected the first sawmill in the area. Phillip Williams opened the first grist mill and the settlers traveled miles to have their grain ground. Wilson Allen erected the first steam grist mill and sawmill which was also used as a carding factory. Railroads began stretching rails in this direction and growth of the young town became more rapid.

In 1842 Decatur had a population of 500 persons with prospects of more to come. During the following decade hopes for a quick prosperity was dampened when fire destroyed the steam sawmill and work on the railroad stopped due to financial reasons.

Things looked better again after 1852 when the Illinois Central again began laying tracks toward Decatur, and growth of the town became continuous and substantial.

Lots sold for higher prices and many additions were laid out. Through a special charter in 1856 the town was divided into four wards. An election of city officials was held and John P. Post was elected Decatur's first mayor.

CHAPTER 3

EARLY BUSINESS



The first indication that Decatur would be more than a dream in the minds of a few settlers came when James Renshaw erected a log hotel-tavern on main street just off the square in October of 1829.

With a \$4 license Renshaw opened his place of business, offering breakfast for guests and feed for their horses at a combined price of 37½ cents. Compared to today's prices, cost of a meal in 1829 was almost incredible. Renshaw charged only 62½ cents for lodging a man and his horse overnight—with supper. Dinner and horse feed was 37½ cents. Brandy, rum, gin, wine or cordial sold for 25 cents a pint. And whisky or cider brandy could be bought for 12½ cents per half pint.

Renshaw also sold produce, household utensils and farming equipment. From the local settlers he bought fresh pork at one and one-half cents a pound, deerskin at 18 cents a pound and beef hides at \$1.32 each.

During 1830 when the Lincoln family lived in Macon county, Abraham Lincoln's father, Thomas Lincoln, often came to Renshaw's for "barks," a liquid tonic for colds and fever.

In front of the tavern and next to the dirt road which was then the street, there was stretched a huge log upon which were nailed boxes for feeding horses. Here the local gentry often met to play cards. And, in fact, early court records show many "indictments for gaming" were issued to civic leaders who played cards and gambled in front of Renshaw's place.

When Renshaw first started his tavern, business receipts amounted to about \$10 a day. As the town grew, so grew his profits, and often he would drive cattle down to St. Louis markets and bring back loads of merchandise for his store. With the money he made he bought land and eventually laid out an addition in the northeast section of Decatur.

The second store in the area was begun by Isaac Pugh and located on West Main Street. Pugh sold all types of dry goods and hardware which were transported overland from St. Louis, the largest city in the west at that time. Another store, operated by John Ward, was located south of Decatur at Indian Bluff on the Sangamon river. This business was patronized mainly by families of the Ward settlement and carried a stock of groceries and some dry goods.

Tea, sugar and coffee were costly then and were little used. Instead of paying high prices, early settlers used maple sugar, wild honey and molasses for sweetening. Sassafras tea, and mint tea were popular beverages as well as parched rye, barley, and other grains substituted for coffee.

In 1833 William Cantrill (for whom Cantrell Street was named) opened Decatur's first general merchandising store in a log structure located on what is now the southwest corner of East Main Street and the square. From 1833 to 1835, "Uncle Billy", as Cantrill was called, served as postmaster and was characterized by carrying letters about in his hat. Being congenial by nature, "Uncle Billy" soon became one of the most popular men in the county. After retiring from business, he entered politics and served on the town board of trustees as county treasurer for four years. Later he became a member of the state legislature.

Legend has it that Cantrill, while serving as county treasurer, would watch from his courthouse window to see if anyone new was coming to town. As soon as a farmer drove in to hitch his horses in the town square, "Uncle Billy" would dash down to shake his hand, ask about the farmer's family, how he was getting along, and then help unhitch the horses. He became so expert at unhitching that he could perform this activity faster than anyone else in the county, thus contributing considerably to his successes on election days.

CHAPTER 4

COURTHOUSE



One of the problems confronting the city fathers of Decatur was the fact that they held the authority for a county organization but had no place to house it. Holding court sessions in blacksmith shops and in the Ward home was not a fit setting for a new seat of government. Besides, the Ward home was outside the county seat and if county business was to be transacted efficiently a courthouse needed to be built.

Fired with enthusiasm for the project, male citizens of the sprawling town began cutting timbers for the new courthouse in the fall of 1829. Slowed down by the winter months, work was resumed in the spring of 1830. Records are not clear as to the progress of the building outside of the fact that John Hanks was paid \$9.87½ for chinking and daubing, and Luther Hunting \$8 for expenses for laying the floor. In September, 1831, Isaac Pugh needed \$2.37½ for glass for the windows. By the April term of 1832 James Johnson completed the building, except for the chimney, at a cost of \$286.60. It stood on the southwest corner of Lincoln square, a story and a half log building, resplendent with clapboard roof and puncheon floor. The chimney was later completed when funds became available.

Despite the fact that the building was unfinished by the spring of 1830, celebration festivities for the opening of the initial term of Macon County circuit court were held on May 6. Families from miles around came to the gala event. Townspeople and farmers thronged the building to hear their first court session. They listened to the latest news and views from prominent citizens as there were no newspapers in Decatur at that time and the courthouse served

as a community clearing house on politics, gossip, and neighborhood activities.

Judge Samuel Lockwood, one of the circuit court judges in the district, presided over the first term. Despite the fact that the docket promised no cases of murder, burglary, larceny, or divorce, people swarmed into town just to be there.

Convening of court became one of the important events of the year. Everyone came to town; lawyers, clients, witnesses, all bringing relatives and friends. The new courthouse was used by Macon County for nearly ten years, not only for court sessions but it housed all public gatherings in Decatur; church services, school, and social activities.

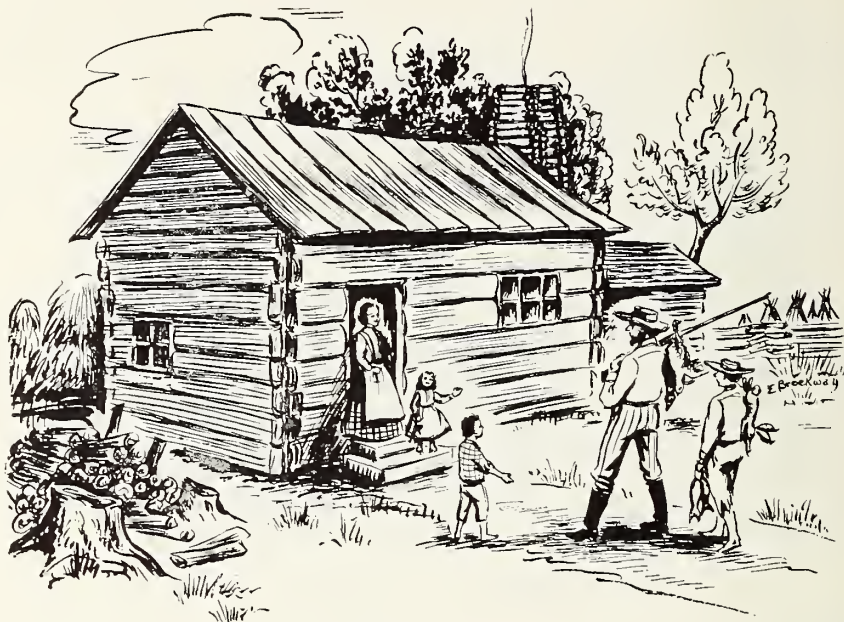
After this building was outgrown and a second house built, the log house was sold to Robert Allen, who moved it to his farm east of town, where it was used as a home, then as a barn. A later owner of the farm, recognizing the historical significance of the building, in 1893 gave it to Old Settlers Association which placed it in Riverside Park which was at the south end of Jasper street on the Sangamon River. Later it was turned over to the city park department and moved to Fairview Park. Because it had deteriorated beyond repair, the Macon County Lincoln Memorial Association had it rebuilt in the winter of 1959 when it was moved to its present location. A few original logs still remain in the building.

Since Decatur was no different from other communities, a jail was needed to go with the new courthouse. A two room building was erected in 1832 of logs on the northwest corner of Prairie and Water streets. This jail was moved about 1836 to the northwest corner of Wood and Church streets, where it burned. The county was without a jail until about 1843 when a two story, two cell brick structure was built on the site of the burned jail. This was used until 1867 when a new stone jail was built with twenty-four cells on the south side of Wood street.

Decatur had another form of punishment in the early days which reflected the practices of the early eastern colonists. This inexpensive and direct way to handle law breakers, consisted of a whipping post which stood in the public square.

CHAPTER 5

PIONEER LIFE



Pioneers who came into the Decatur area during the early 1830's were drawn here by the urge to come "out west" where there was plenty of rich land and a prosperous future. People from Pennsylvania, Ohio, Vermont, Alabama, North Carolina, Tennessee and Kentucky bundled all their belongings on a wagon, hitched up their oxen or team of horses and after many days and weeks of arduous travel stopped to stake their prospects on the virgin soil of central Illinois. The Warnicks, the Bradens, James Geddes and John Sawyer, the Spanglers, the Williams, the Robinsons, the Packards and Huntings, all came seeking a new life on the frontier of America.

By this time the Stevens and Ward settlements were well established, the land had been surveyed into lots for the city of Decatur and ready for business. Land could be bought for \$1.50 to \$2.50 an acre and talk of the "rich country along the Sangamon River" was attracting wide attention.

Settlers at first bought land along the river, where timber was available for cabins, fences and fuel, where water for stock could be had, and where the land could be easily broken. But gradually this land was taken and others settled where the high, thick, grasses covered the sunbaked soil which was under water during the rainy seasons.

Food was abundant, and most of the settlers lived upon wild game they killed with their guns, while the women soon learned the art of "keeping" the game that could not be used at once. Meanwhile, they made homespun yarns,

in their newly erected log cabins and often helped their menfolk with the heavy work of clearing away timber and draining the soil for growing crops.

As the settlers grew in number they became regulated by law. One such law was that all fields must be protected from livestock running loose. Often the six to seven rail high fences, which had to be built around the crops, cost the farmer more than what he had paid for the land.

Money was scarce and prices were high. Corn seed was hard to find and cost \$1 a bushel. Many people worked or traded for what they wanted. A ten acre tract from the middle of Decatur once was traded for a gold watch and chain and at another time a lot was traded for a black hat. A man could haul wheat by wagon to Chicago, Springfield or St. Louis and get only a half yard of calico for one bushel of grain. Letters at the postal center lay for weeks because of the lack of cash to pay the postage.

The pioneer raised only enough crops for his family's needs, and after these were harvested in the fall there was little to do except cut wood, hunt and fish. Since there were no matches, the cabin fire was kept going night and day, winter and summer. The settler's ax was always kept sharpened as it was the most important tool he owned. With it he felled the trees to make his house, split logs to make his fences, and fashioned oak and walnut to make his furniture.

Deer, bear, turkeys, ducks, quail, squirrels, rabbits, and prairie chickens, plus his own livestock afforded the pioneer an abundance of meat, fowl, and game. Fish could be had from the river. In the summertime small gardens furnished greens, potatoes, corn and cabbages. Johnny cake and corn pone, buckwheat cakes, mush and milk, were part of the daily menu. Maple sugar, molasses, and wild honey provided sweetening. In season there was wild fruit. Some of the settlers, such as Amos Robinson, planted apple trees which bore profusely after a few years. Food was eaten from wooden bowls, pewter ware and tin plates. A gourd was usually used as a drinking cup. The Dutch oven, a kettle and a frying pan were the principal cooking utensils. Most every home had a whisky barrel, which used up the excess corn crop, and provided liquid hospitality for guests.

The women kept busy carding and spinning flax and wool, and weaving the threads into cloth. This homespun, called linsey woolsey, was made into dresses, shirts and jeans. Every cabin had its spinning wheel and loom. The women made their own soap with lye from wood ashes, and starch from the wheat bran.

One of the worst hardships of the people, one which retarded settlement, was the annual fall siege of malaria, a disease resulting from the mosquito ridden undrained land of this area. It was called ague, chills and fever, and the "Illinois shakes". Persons afflicted with this disease, which included most everyone, would first be stricken with an overpowering shaking, then a burning fever. This happened every day or every other day, sometimes affecting whole families at once. For this reason many settlers left Decatur after one siege of the shakes.

But pioneer life was not all hardship and privation. Hospitality was a

must in every home. It was nothing to travel twenty miles to visit a sick friend or help a new comer "raise" his home. Horse races, shooting matches, deer hunts, fox and wolf chases, jumping and wrestling matches, dancing, singing schools, court days, house raisings, corn shuckings, ax throwing exhibitions, and trials of strength constituted the social life of the pioneer. Horse racing became popular while the farmers waited for their grain to be ground at the mills. Using common farm stock they would bet their cows and other animals on the outcome of the races. Often, when whisky was flowing freely, someone was ready for a good fight, which usually resulted in no more damage than a bloody nose or a bruised head. Many quarrels were settled with the fists, especially if some one was called a liar. When the one defeated admitted he was licked, the fight ended with hand shakes and applause from the spectators.

CHAPTER 6

THE LINCOLNS COME TO DECATUR



Four days after Abraham Lincoln's twenty-first birthday, he and his family, the Squire Hall family, and the Dennis Hanks family—a caravan of thirteen people, three wagons, a cow, an extra horse, and a little dog—set out from Spencer County, Indiana for Illinois. Two weeks they were on the way, with Abraham alternately driving one of the wagons and striding alongside under a peddler's pack of pins, needles, buttons and tinware to sell on the way. It was still so cold that the ground and water froze overnight, thawing in the daytime, making the traveling hard for the oxen.

John Hanks had sent word to the Lincolns that this was territory that they would like. Over the old Springfield-Paris road they came, fording at John Ward's ferry, and stopping the afternoon of their arrival in Decatur on the public square near the southeast corner. A tablet marking this site may be seen on the west wall of the Enloe Drug building.

After making inquiries concerning land purchases and making contact with John Hanks, who lived north of the Stevens' settlement, they camped for the night on the edge of town. The next morning they moved on to visit their cousin, John Hanks, at his cabin northwest of Decatur. He told them of some land along the Sangamon south of Harristown which he had cleared, intending to build a cabin with the logs he had already cut. Being unable to break the sod on this land Mr. Hanks had located in Hickory Point instead. He offered the

Lincolns the logs which they accepted. It was here, on this farm that Abe split his first of thousands of Illinois rails, a feat which was later associated with him during his political life.

The new cabin set some one hundred feet back from the Sangamon, offering a good view of the river valley. Abraham helped his father put up the cabin, smokehouse and barn, using a hand saw, a "drawer knife", a common ax, and a broad ax. The floors and doors were puncheon, a luxury which Mrs. Lincoln insisted upon having, as one of their earlier homes in Indiana had only dirt floors. As soon as the house was finished, Abraham with others split rails to fence about ten acres of ground. Then he hitched up the oxen and broke up the sod, making it ready to plant corn.

After this he went out among the neighbors to look for work. Being six feet four inches tall, strong and able bodied, he could do the work of three, out-splitting any man in the county. All summer he worked for others, splitting rails, chopping wood, plowing and harvesting. During this time, he broke up fifty acres of prairie land with four yoke of oxen.

Some of his work went to pay for clothes. When his old jeans were practically in rags he went to Mrs. Nancy Miller, for whose husband he had been cutting rails, to bargain for a new suit of jeans. He agreed to split four hundred rails for every yard of walnut dyed cloth she made. If Mrs. Miller used four yards of cloth to cover his long legs, he paid her 1,600 rails at 37½¢ a hundred, or \$6 for his new pants.

One day while he was plowing a field west of Church Street, and north of West Main, Lincoln heard the sound of cheering downtown at the square. Stopping his oxen he went to see what was going on. A Democrat was making a political speech aimed at the old line Whigs, the party which Lincoln favored. This was more than he could take. When the speaker had finished, Lincoln, wearing a broad brimmed straw hat, a loose shirt, tight towlinen trousers, and barefooted, stepped up quickly on a nearby tree stump, commanding the crowd's attention. With energy and feeling, he defended his party. The crowd cheered, giving him encouragement and approval. Another speech made by Lincoln was given after a wrestling match in William Warnick's harvest field.

The year which the Lincolns spent in Macon County was the hardest year in its history. There was malaria in the summer and the "deep snow" in the winter. Thomas Lincoln, Abe's father, came often to Renshaw's to buy "barks" that year. After a bitter winter of blizzard, after blizzard the family moved in the spring of 1831 to Goose Neck Prairie in Coles County where they built again. Abraham and John Hanks left Decatur in canoes, going down the Sangamon to Springfield where they loaded flatboats, owned by Denton Offut, with produce and traveled down the waterways to New Orleans. When Abe returned from the trip he went to work in Mr. Offut's store in New Salem, a village twenty miles northwest of Springfield.

After Lincoln was admitted to the bar in 1837 he was in Decatur many times on law cases as he traveled in the First Judicial Circuit which included Macon County. At first he came on horseback and later he acquired a buggy in which to make his rounds. The Macon house, at the corner of Prairie and Franklin streets, was his stopping place.

CHAPTER 7

EARLY EDUCATION IN DECATUR



Providing an education for their children was a primary concern for the early settlers of Decatur. There were no public schools in Illinois by 1830, but crude cabins for subscription schools were put up even before Macon County was laid out. These schools were furnished with what was available; seats were slabs of timber supported by sticks; desks were puncheon shelves arranged around the walls, fastened with wooden pins. Holes were cut in the walls for windows, and covered with greased paper.

Money was raised by subscription from the families with children, which was not very much. This paid the teacher's salary. Often the teacher was not much better educated than his pupils, but had to wield a fair amount of brawn to keep his mansized pupils in line.

The first schools erected around Decatur were in the Ward and Stevens settlements. The Ward school, located three and one-half miles southwest of Decatur, was a log cabin built in 1825. The first teacher here was called "Frozen" Taylor. This building was abandoned in 1845. Since then four different buildings were erected, the last one being known as the Cross Roads school which was annexed to the city in 1948 and finally closed in 1952. It is still being used as a residence.

The next school was built in 1826 on Stevens creek in the neighborhood of the Stevens settlement. The first school inside the new town of Decatur was in 1830. This was held in a small room on Main street until the new

log court house was built, then the school moved there for several years, with Daniel McCall as teacher. For want of a permanent home, the school went from the Christian Church to a house on East William street, then to a house on Jackson street. The house on William was burned by an enthusiastic fire builder, one of the pupils who had previously been chided for not building a big enough fire in the morning. By laying on more and more wood, the boy got the chimney so hot that by the time the other pupils came to school the building was in ashes.

By 1842 parents were demanding a permanent building for school purposes. The fraternal order of Masons also needed a home, and agreed to erect a two story building on the corner of Water and North Park streets. The lower room was to be used for a school and the upper one for a lodge hall. This was Decatur's first public school building and was used until 1856 when the school trustees sold their share of the property to the Masons and began plans for a larger building.

Private schools operated in Decatur before the public school system was inaugurated. Mrs. Almira Powers opened a school in 1849 which became the best known and most influential in Decatur. She taught first in her home, later in the Masonic Temple and in a brick building on West North street. Rev. John Coleman also started a school in 1855 in the basement of the First Methodist Church, which offered high school subjects for enterprising students. The first boys' school here was operated by Mrs. Baldwin in the 1860's on West Main street.

Decatur took advantage of the Act of 1849 which gave a district authority to vote a local tax for school support. In 1851 a tax of ten cents on \$100 property valuation was voted for the repair of the school shared with the Masons. Provision for the taxing of all state residents for schools was passed in 1855. Free education for children in all the districts was established for at least six months of the year.

With this help Decatur began plans for a larger school. On the northwest corner of Church and North streets where the Gastman school now stands, the "Big Brick" school was built. This two story building with four rooms on the first floor and three on the second was opened in the fall of 1857 with two teachers and J. H. Remsburg as principal. By 1859 the population had increased to the extent that school rooms were opened in a gun shop, the Masonic hall, a freight house, and in church basements.

Some of the text books used in these early schools were Webster's Elementary Spelling Book, McGuffey's New Series of Readers, Wells' English Grammar, Primary and Common School Geographies, Lossing's Primary and Pictorial History of the United States, and Payson, Dunton and Scribner's System of Penmanship.

Teacher's salaries ranged from \$30 to \$40 a month, with principals getting from \$330 to \$500 for six months. One of the guiding lights of the school system was E. A. Gastman who became superintendent of schools and head of the high school in 1861. He served in these offices for 46 years, bringing Decatur's educational system to a high level of efficiency.

CHAPTER 8

EARLY CHURCHES



Among the families who came to settle on the rich soil surrounding Decatur were Baptists, Methodists, Christians and Presbyterians. Religion was part of their culture, and through this influence, then as now, Decatur became noted for its law abiding and philanthropic citizens.

Religious services were held in homes where groups of one faith met to pray, sing religious songs, and testify. When a minister came into a community, church members and friends would gather to hear him preach. Services could not be held regularly because of bad weather and impassable roads.

A number of Methodists lived in the Stevens settlement. In the fall of 1829, Rev. Peter Cartwright, leader of Methodism in Illinois and presiding elder of the Sangamon district, came to this settlement and organized the first Methodist "society" in Macon County, with about twelve members. Peter Cartwright typified the circuit rider of his time. He was fiery of speech, a man who endured hardships and privations as he rode about the communities preaching to the people. He was a man of courage. He met men and women without fear, and if necessary to uphold his beliefs, he would fight with fists or weapons. For forty-four years he rode a circuit of 300 miles, his salary being \$80 a year when he could collect it.

This new group of Methodists became a part of the Salt Creek circuit, of which Rev. W. L. Deneen was pastor.

The Stevens settlement was host to a camp meeting in 1830 and portions

of the enthusiastic attendance stayed over and thus swelled the ranks of the congregation and settlement. In 1834 the Methodists felt the need of a church meeting hall because their homes were too small to hold everyone.

On the east side of Church street, between Main and Prairie, a new church was built in 1839 on a hazel-bush covered lot donated by James Renshaw, operator of the tavern and store off the public square. The church was made of hewn oak logs, with two rows of slab seats; the one on the right side for the men, and the one on the left for women. Candles furnished the light for the evening services in the rough, handmade pioneer house of worship. This building was used by the Methodists until 1854 when a new brick church was erected on the corner of Water and Prairie. Despite Rev. Peter Cartwright's stern disapproval, this church when completed and dedicated, contained the first furnace and organ in Decatur, Cartwright called the organ the "work of the devil" and would have nothing to do with it.

The old log building was used for many years as a carpenter and wagon making shop after the Methodists abandoned it. In 1862, during the Civil War, it was rented by the Hospital Aid society—a group of war relief women—for housing war refugees sent up from the south. A group of about forty vermin-infested refugees were placed in the old church for several months before being moved on.

In 1834 the Rev. Joseph Hostetler came to Decatur and held a series of meetings for the promulgation of the Christian faith. Those who came to hear him met in the log courthouse until they constructed their own church in 1835 on the site where the Hotel Orlando now stands.

The first Christian church was a log building about 20 feet square and stood on a two acre tract of land donated by Mr. Hostetler. It was used by the congregation for about 20 years, during which time it was used simultaneously as the city school. Some of Decatur's early prominent citizens attended this church. By the 1850's this building was outgrown and a new brick church was built on the corner of north Main and North streets.

Baptists came into the area during the 1840's, holding their first meetings in the home of Captain David Allen, a prominent citizen of Decatur during its early years. It was in this house, in the 400 block of north Water, that the church was organized in September, 1843, with Elder H. W. Dodge in charge. The first building owned by this congregation was built at the northeast corner of Water and William, being dedicated December 27, 1857.

The first Presbyterian sermon preached in Macon county was by Rev. John Berry in a log school house three and one-half miles southwest of Decatur, on a farm owned for many years by P. M. Wikoff. The first congregation organized was the Mt. Zion Cumberland Presbyterian Church in April of 1830. It wasn't until several years later that a congregation was developed in Decatur in 1852.

CHAPTER 9

PIONEER MAILMEN



When the early settlers of Decatur wrote to their relatives and friends back east about life in Illinois they were never sure that the letter had reached its destination until an answer was received several weeks or months later. Postal service during these early years was an event, not an established system.

Not too many people could write, and those that could, did not have the paper or the postage for heavy correspondence. Letters were written with goose quill pens, using ink squeezed from plants and berries. It was then blotted with a fine sand which the writer sprinkled over the letter, much as a salt shaker is used. Those who had a lot to say with very little paper to say it on wrote across the page, then turned the letter upside down and wrote back the other way between the lines, making a double-deck letter. This crowded in a lot of information but was very hard to read. The back side of the letter was left blank, and after it was folded, the address was written in this space. It was then sealed with a red sealing wax and stamped with a seal ring, ready for mailing.

Before Decatur had a post office of its own, letters had to be taken to Springfield to be mailed. Then mail began coming from Shelbyville once a week, or at least the mail bag came. Often there was no mail in it. As service was opened between Decatur and neighboring communities it became necessary to establish a post office.

In March, 1830, Daniel McCall, who was Decatur's first county and circuit clerk, probate judge and notary public, (also school teacher), was appointed postmaster. In all probability the first post office was in the newly built courthouse while McCall served as clerk and judge for the county. Isaac Pugh and William Cantrill, store keepers, kept the mail in boxes in their stores. Dr. John Speer, pioneer doctor who operated the first drug store in town, was postmaster in the late 1830's, and kept the mail in a box among his drugs. Often the mail was carried inside the postmaster's tall hat for 'on the spot' delivery.

Before the advent of stage coaches, mail was delivered from one town to another by a carrier on horseback. When he arrived in town from his weekly trip everyone would gather at the store or courthouse to find out what lucky person received a letter. The postmaster would take the mailpouch from the carrier, empty it, and read off all the names of those receiving letters. If they had 25c they would step up and claim their letter. If their cash was low they would have to wait sometimes for several weeks, until they had the money. Some people were mean enough to send blank letters to those they didn't like.

The only time there was fast mail service between Decatur and her neighbors was when the wolves chased the carrier, then it was ahead of time. It took two days for a carrier to go the seventy miles to Paris, where he stayed two days, then returned in two days, with only his horse and the wild animals for company. Very few homes lined the road. Some of the time the carrier could use his open buggy, but with the roads being what they were a horse made better time. He made fifty cents a day for making the trip even if there was no mail delivered.

After the stages were put in operation along the routes, the mail was carried on these, but often it was necessary to go back to the horseback method during bad weather. On the routes crossed by rivers, the government inspector placed marks on the trees along the river banks as a guide for the carrier, telling whether or not the river could be crossed at certain points. If the water was high enough to reach the marker, the carrier could turn around and return home and be given credit for making the trip. If the water was below the mark he had a good swim ahead of him.

CHAPTER 10

THE BLACK HAWK WAR



Unlike pioneers in other parts of the United States, settlers in the Decatur area seldom felt fear of Indian raids until the spring of 1832. It was at this time that Black Hawk, chief of the Sac Federation, and his young bronze bodied braves made a second attempt to end white settlement of the land east of the Mississippi. This section had been ceded to the United States two years before but the Indians were determined to make one more attempt to regain their old homes from the whites.

Beaten and driven back by General Gaines in 1831, the wily and restless Sac chieftain became angry when whites began to take over lands, especially the area about Rock River in the northwestern part of the state, which had been the home of his people. He returned with a larger force in 1832 and began to massacre the settlers who were moving in and building their homes along the river. During the raids, Black Hawk, determined to reestablish camp and regain the land, brought the tribe women and children with him.

Soon all northern and central Illinois was threatened, and Governor Reynolds issued a call for 700 volunteers to fight the Indians. Sixteen hundred men and two regiments of regulars reported for duty at Beardstown. Included among these men, under the command of Brigadier-General Whiteside, was a company from Macon county under Captain James Johnson.

Fresh from breaking sod and planting crops, these fighters knew nothing of warfare or military training and very little about discipline. They furnished their own provisions, weapons, and horses, and often acted with little judgment.

or obedience to the leadership of their commanding officers.

Captain Johnson's company of the Fifth Regiment saw action in one skirmish with the Indians about twelve miles north of Dixon in the northwestern part of the state. Black Hawk, with a small group of warriors, saw he was outnumbered and sent in two men with a white flag. They were seized and roughly treated without a chance to parley. A second group was sent in but they too were fired upon, one of them being killed. Seeing the treachery of the whites, Black Hawk threw the full force of his small group against the regiment, routing it, and killing eleven men, including James Milton from Macon county. The remnants of the regiment stopped running when they reached Dixon.

Soon after this a company of rangers was organized in Decatur for the protection of frontier counties in June of 1832 under the command of the county sheriff, William Warnick. The fifty men who made up the company traveled eastward as far as Kickapoo Town near the head of the Big Vermillion river. By this time all the Indians who had been there were gone and the Rangers came back to guard the home front. They were mustered out three months later. While they were gone rumors of a possible Indian attack spread among the Decatur townspeople. Doors which heretofore were kept unlatched at night were now locked and all roadways were closely watched.

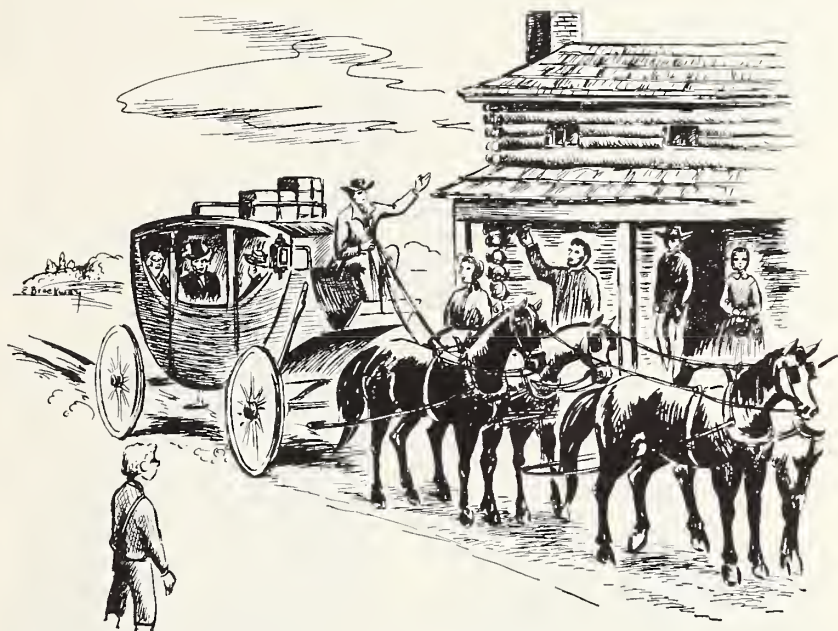
Black Hawk's dream of repossessing the Illinois lands met with final defeat when he was driven from his strongholds on the Wisconsin river in July, and the Bad-Axe river in August. The volunteers returned home, were discharged with a payment of \$52 apiece and a land warrant for 160 acres.

The roster of Captain James Johnson's company of eleven officers and thirty-three men included many of Macon County's leading citizens. James Johnson was the man who built the first courthouse and jail. William Warnick, then county sheriff, was first lieutenant of the company and was promoted to rank of major when he became leader of the Rangers. Isaac Pugh* was second lieutenant and became captain when James Johnson was made colonel in charge of the Fifth Regiment. Pugh served in the Mexican War as a colonel and a general of a brigade in the Civil War. Many other names such as James Ward, J. D. Wright, Joseph, John, and William Hanks, were all men who helped in the growth and development of Macon County and Decatur. Many were sons of Revolutionary war heroes and a few had fought in the war of 1812.

*Isaac Pugh left his imprint on Decatur when a school and a street were named for him. Pugh street which formed the southern boundary of a tract of land owned by Pugh is now Grand Avenue. Pugh school is at the corner of Monroe and Grand.

CHAPTER 11

EARLY TRANSPORTATION



The barrier of mud which surrounded the small village of Decatur left it practically isolated from the outside world until the coming of the railroads in 1854. In this small village in the center of the vast plains of Illinois, the only sure way of getting from one part of the area to another was by walking, riding a horse, or driving a wagon. Money was scarce and markets were so far away and inaccessible the people were discouraged in trying to buy or sell their produce away from town.

For years there was talk of making the Sangamon river navigable but that didn't make it so. Abraham Lincoln made one of his extemporary speeches in Decatur on this subject in 1830. A steamboat did get up the river as far as Springfield and was stuck there for some time. Several tried to send flatboats down the river with little success. In 1846 five flatboats loaded with corn and hogs were successful in getting out of the Decatur area, but these got tied up at Long Point south of Niantic and had to stay there during the winter. In the spring the high water helped them finish the trip to New Orleans. Three more boats were built that spring and followed the first on to the south.

The success of these adventures spurred the builders to get the public to help clear out the debris from the river. The response was good and the people worked hard for awhile but eventually gave up because of the insurmountable difficulties they encountered.

Meanwhile emigrant traffic increased, despite the morassed condition of the roads. Though roads increased in number, they did not improve in quality,

as there was no city or state aid for road maintenance. The establishment of stage lines with neighboring towns helped to get new roads started, but riding a stage was a hazardous sport even for the strong backed, especially when one had to walk or help push the stage out of the mud. By 1851 there were five roads leading into Decatur, one from Bloomington, one from Monticello, one from Paris, one from Shelbyville, and one from Springfield.

There is a story told of how a farmer named Hockaday went to Maroa to see a circus leader who was on his way to Decatur. The only road from Maroa to Decatur swung west of the Hockaday farm, and the farsighted farmer told the circus leader the shortest route to Decatur, which went right past his farm. The circus followed Hockaday directly south into Decatur and after all the wagons had passed over the land a well rutted road remained which later became State Route No. 2 and then U. S. 51.

Along these routes were stage stands where the stage made regular stops to change horses, eat, and if necessary, to secure overnight lodging for passengers and horses. These stage stands were busy places as there was usually a blacksmith shop and other small businesses close by. One such busy place was on the stage line between Decatur and Paris along what is now Illinois 121. It was operated in the 1840's by a farmer named Henry Davis, who also operated a blacksmith shop, a horse-mill, a stage stand and a post office. This was community center for Long Creek township.

About a mile and a half east of this place, close to the old stage line was the John Stickel tavern, which was the scene of many interesting events. Abraham Lincoln often put his hat on one of the wooden pegs at the door when he was riding the Eighth Judicial Circuit which covered fourteen counties. During the five years that he handled law cases in these counties he would stay from two days to two weeks in each county seat. He drove Old Buck hitched to a rattletrap buggy through all kinds of weather. Stephen Douglas also traveled the stage roads and made speeches at community gatherings along the route.

Another stage stand was one built by Christopher Miller about four miles west of Decatur. Guests slept in the loft and during winter weather often woke up to find themselves under a blanket of snow.

The stage usually was of the Concord type carriage, seating six people and pulled by four horses. The trip to Springfield and Paris could be made in one day in good weather, otherwise it took two days. One stage operator used to brag that his stage between Decatur and Springfield was never more than a week behind schedule, even in the worst weather. In wet weather it was impossible to keep on schedule. It was always an event when the stage came into town, its driver blowing a long tin horn and racing into the stopping place in a cloud of dust. Small boys tried to imitate the swing and crack of the whip which only the stage driver knew how to handle.

CHAPTER 12

COURTS AND CASES



During the early years when Decatur was the county seat and many court cases were being held here, the only law official was Sheriff Warnick. Circuit court judges and prosecuting attorneys came from out of town to hear cases tried in the old log courthouse.

It was not until 1834 that the first lawyer, Charles Emerson, came to Decatur to begin practice. Two years later Kirby Benedict settled here, giving the new county seat a legal stability of its own. These men served as probate judges during the 1830's. It was the custom then for lawyers and even Illinois Supreme Court judges to travel with the circuit judge from one county seat to another thus giving small courts the benefit of a wide variety of legal authority. The Decatur court saw a brilliant array of lawyers in its time. When it was in the eighth Judicial circuit such men as Abraham Lincoln, Stephen Douglas,

Leonard Swett, David Davis, John Stuart and other notable lawyers came here.

After Lincoln was admitted to the bar and began to travel the circuit in 1837, he was often in Decatur on law cases. During the May court session of 1838 he conducted the John Lowry case in the old log courthouse shortly before it was abandoned. Historians record that at the time Lincoln wore a handsome suit of blue jeans with leather straps under his insteps to hold his trousers down.

Most of the visiting attorneys stayed at the Macon House at the corner of Prairie and Franklin streets as it was considered the best hotel in town. At one time a new resident of Decatur—Mrs. H. C. Johns—who was temporarily living at the hotel, had delivered to her the first piano in Decatur. The landlord suggested that she wait until after court to get help to move the piano to her room. When the lawyers came they (including Lincoln) moved Mrs. Johns' piano as requested. With the piano in place, Lincoln asked Mrs. Johns to play for him, which she did.

By 1837 the old log courthouse seemed too primitive and inadequate for the growing town. The county commissioner contracted Leonidas Munsell of Edgar county to build a bigger and better courthouse. One thousand dollars was paid in advance of the \$10,625 necessary for the building, with specifications that it be equal to or superior to the McLean county courthouse. After some discussion about the location of the building it was decided to build it in the southeast corner of the public square not back in line with other buildings. It was constructed of brick, two stories high, topped with a dome cupola. A 120-pound bell was placed in the cupola. The courthouse was on the second floor, with four rooms downstairs. It was completed in 1838 and ready for court purposes by June 20, the most pretentious building in town.

During the early years an important person was the court crier. It was his business to call the witnesses and litigants into court when their cases were called. John Moreland, crier for many years, had a strong, loud voice and could be heard for blocks away. When someone was wanted in court, Moreland would stick his head out the second story window of the courthouse and call loudly until they came. This practice was discontinued after one of the judges decided in 1870 that witnesses and litigants should make it their business to be in court when their cases were called.

Court week in Decatur always filled the town with visitors; lawyers, clients, witnesses, peddlers, show men, gamblers and curiosity seekers. Gay social events were arranged for that week and the hotels were jammed.

The brick courthouse was used until after the Civil War, gradually coming into disuse. It has been told that cows wandered in and out of the lower rooms, while the upper ones were still in use.

CHAPTER 13

EARLY HOTELS



One of the first needs of a new village was a place for visitors and travelers to eat and sleep while they were making up their minds whether to stay or go on. "Uncle Jimmy" Renshaw's log tavern, with its few beds upstairs and meals downstairs, was the first of many boarding houses and hotels that came and went since Decatur had its beginning.

In 1829 "Landlady" Harrell and her two sons, John and Landy, started a boarding house and hotel business on the north side of the square, then moved to the south side of the square to open the Social Hall. In 1854 they refurnished the hall and later built a three story building which for many years was Decatur's leading hotel. It was known as the Harrell House, the Cassell House, the Shoaff House, the Tremont House, the Oglesby House, Varney's Hotel, and the Cloudas House as different owners operated it.

In 1861 it was bought by the Laux brothers and the name changed to the St. Nicholas. The original building was torn down in 1865 and replaced by a three story brick. In 1892 that building was demolished to make room for a new five story building, which is part of the building in use today.

After the Laux brothers took over the operation of the St. Nicholas they installed three kerosene lamps to light up each stairway, the first such lights in Decatur. The porters filled water pitchers for the guests if they left them outside their rooms in the mornings. A lantern was hung in the hotel window at night to guide bus drivers coming from the railway station. Candles furnished light for the remainder of the hotel.

Decatur's most prominent hotel was the Macon House, a two story struc-

ture built by Captain David Allen and Dr. T. H. Read, containing twelve bedrooms and a large attic. It stood facing Franklin street and Prairie and was operated by Mrs. Elizabeth Nesbitt and her two sons. During the 1840's it was made popular by its good food and management under David Krone and his wife. It is said that lawyers riding the circuit would prolong court sessions in Decatur so that they could take advantage of the excellent hotel service at the Macon. Such men as Abraham Lincoln, Judge David Davis, Leonard Swett, and other notable members of the bar were guests here.

Several other proprietors followed the Krones. In 1856 High Taylor added a third floor and built on the east and on the south, making it a sixty room hotel. At this time it was called the Taylor House, then under W. L. Barnum it became the Barnum House. Later it became the Revere House. At one time, under Dr. Ross, sumptuous banquets were served which included more than ninety varieties of food.

It was while M. C. Hicks owned the property in 1871 that fire broke out in one of the rooms, presumably from a gas jet being left lit as guests were not used to such modern conveniences. The fire burned most of the day giving the owners and guests time to throw most of their belongings out of the windows. These were piled in Central Park where folks came to pick out their clothes before they could dress.

Up to this time the Revere had been the hub of the city. Cabs and buses from the railroad station stopped there and visitors to the city made it their headquarters. After it was burned it was not rebuilt and the section of town where it stood lost its main attraction and business fell off. Mostly saloons and gambling rooms remained as the better businesses moved into the Main and Water section of town.

CHAPTER 14

EARLY CITY GOVERNMENT



Decatur, known for its neatness and beauty in its first struggling years, grew rather slowly despite the enthusiastic reports sent back east. By 1834 eleven buildings were here; seven dwellings, two stores, a courthouse and a jail, all scattered along dusty, dimly defined streets.

With this small group of people a municipal government was hardly necessary especially when the county commissioners court met in the log court house, dispensing justice for the whole county.

By 1836 about 300 people lived here. Several small businesses had been started including a blacksmith shop, several stores, a small brick yard, a few taverns, three horse mills, a water mill, two distilleries, and a carpenter shop. In 1839 Wilson Allen erected a combination saw mill, grist mill and carding factory, all operated by steam power. A saddle and harness shop, a livery stable, and even a cigar store were later added.

With all these attributes of town life, Decatur seemed to have grown sufficiently to maintain a separate government from the county. There also were rumors that two railroads were going to intersect in the city and if this became a reality, civic preparation must be made to meet future growth.

A town board of trustees was selected by a township election held in the log courthouse for the Decatur district, and in the Ward home for the Ward district south of the river. Richard Oglesby (uncle of R. J. Oglesby who became governor) was named president of the board; Andrew Lane, clerk; James Carter and William Webb, constables, plus seven trustees. Their first meeting

was held on November 5, 1836. Elections were held yearly up until 1841. The town trustees did not meet again until 1846.

In 1839 two elections were held, the second concerning itself with the incorporation of the town of Decatur. These men busied themselves with street improvement, draining off swampy areas, keeping the streets clean, providing watering troughs, welcoming and promoting new businesses, handling a few law cases, seeing that schools and teachers were provided, and keeping the town pump in operation.

The era of internal improvement began in Illinois in 1835, giving the people of Decatur a boost of civic enthusiasm. The state Legislature in 1836 passed a bill allocating \$10,230,000 for the building of the Illinois-Michigan canal; improvement of the Great Wabash, Illinois, Rock, Kaskaskia, and Little Wabash rivers; and establishment of the Great Western mail route, the Central railroad from the mouth of the Ohio to Galena, and the Northern and Southern Cross railroads.

Work began on these projects and money was quickly spent. Credit became strained, financial panic came and banks failed. By 1838 only a short stretch of the Northern Cross railroad was completed, eighty miles from Decatur. This feeble little line finally made it to Springfield, then into Decatur as the Great Western in 1854.

The prospects of having no railroad when two were promised was a hard blow for Decatur's progressiveness during the late 1830's and 40's. During these years the town grew very little. People contented themselves with keeping their businesses going and enjoying the social festivities such as parties, spelling bees, marriages, court days, and political activities.

This picture changed in 1855 after the Great Western (now the Wabash) and the Illinois Central had crossed their lines in the northeastern edge of town. Decatur now began taking on the aspects of a city. Early in this year a special city charter was obtained from the state Legislature, and on January 7, 1856, an election of city officers was held.

John Post was elected mayor over four wards, with judges and aldermen selected for each ward. C. C. Post became clerk and attorney and Samuel Allen was treasurer and assessor. Their first meeting was held in the office of Post and Post on January 25, 1856. Because of the great accumulation of business they met again that evening. From then on they met once a month. The first city marshal was Captain John Hartley, veteran of the Mexican and Civil wars.

By 1867 a new charter was needed. The wards had increased to seven, with two aldermen being elected from each ward. The aldermanic form of government was used until January 18, 1911 when Decatur adopted the commission form of government.

CHAPTER 15

THE MEXICAN WAR



About the most exciting thing that stirred the little village of Decatur in the late 1840's was the outbreak of the struggle for Texas territory between Mexico and the United States.

Texas, presumably an independent territory since 1836, was annexed to the United States as a state in 1846. Her western boundary was in question as Mexico asserted that all land west of the Nueces River, not the Rio Grande, which lay one hundred miles further west, belonged to Mexico.

General Zachary Taylor was sent to the scene and was fired on by Mexican troops on the eastern side of the Rio Grande. Congress declared a state of war and the call for volunteers went into action in May, 1846.

Seventy-eight young men from Macon county came into the recruiting center in Decatur, ready for adventure and a chance to fight. Isaac Pugh, who had experience from the Black Hawk War, was made captain; Richard J. Oglesby, first lieutenant; and A. Froman and John Post, second lieutenants.

As they all met in front of the courthouse on June 7, 1846, before their departure, an eight by twelve foot silk flag, which had been made by a group of Decatur women, was presented to Company C.

From Decatur the group went to Springfield, to find that the three allotted Illinois regiments had already been filled. To save their having to return home again a Fourth regiment was formed through the efforts of Congressman

Ficklin of Illinois. The Macon County men became part of this group and went into training at Jefferson Barracks in Missouri.

By the latter part of July they were on their way to New Orleans and shipped across the Gulf to the mouth of the Rio Grande at Brazos. Eight miles up the river the first Company C member, Sergeant Galbreath, was killed.

A squadron on its way back from burying Galbreath stopped to investigate a disturbance in a steamer which was docked nearby. In the skirmish that followed, Charles Dillon was killed; Colonel Baker, commander of the Fourth Regiment suffered a bayonet thrust through his mouth and neck; Lieutenant Post received cuts in his chest, and R. H. Steward was bayoneted in the thigh.

It didn't take long for Texas, California, and New Mexico to be captured by the United States forces under General Zachary Taylor, Captain John Fremont, Admiral Stockton, and General Stephen Kearney. Santa Anna's forces were moving south, back into Mexico.

The Fourth Regiment went to assist General Winfield Scott in his assault against Vera Cruz, a strategy which he hoped would mean the end of Santa Anna and the capture of the Mexican capital. Vera Cruz was bombarded and captured on March 29, 1847. The flag made in Decatur was flown at the head of the regiment in this campaign. Scott then moved on north to meet Santa Anna at the mountain pass of Cerro Gordo.

Company C was the head of the brigade, its flag flying, as it charged the opposing army. They captured some prize items from the defeated Mexicans, including \$25,000 in silver, and Santa Anna's cork leg, which was left in his carriage when he attempted to escape. This leg later became one of the valued war relics on exhibition in the Centennial building in Springfield.

This battle had its effects on Decatur for one of its principle streets was named for the Mountain pass—Cerro Gordo. When Richard Oglesby* returned to Decatur several years after the war he purchased a sizable allotment of land in the northwest part of town with the money he mined in California during the gold rush. On this land he laid out lots and streets, naming one Cerro Gordo and the other Eldorado, honoring the source of his gold.

Meanwhile, General Scott pushed on to capture Mexico City and this capital with its territory came into American hands. A treaty of peace was signed, which gave California, New Mexico, and the disputed Texas area to the United States. A sum of \$15,000,000 was paid to the Mexican government for this annexation, and peace has been kept between the two countries ever since.

Company C returned home through New Orleans and St. Louis, arriving in Decatur on June 1, 1847, carrying their banner with them. The whole city turned out to greet them and they all celebrated with an ox barbecue and other festivities.

*Oglesby school at 2400 North Union was named for Mr. Oglesby.

CHAPTER 16

SOCIAL LIFE IN DECATUR



Life in a frontier village was not all hard work and privations. Young people were never content to sit idly by when there was fun to be had. Spelling and singing bees were held in homes and schools, well attended by young and old of the community.

Abraham Lincoln, when a young man of 21, attended several such gatherings at the log school house southwest of Decatur, often escorting Mary Warnick and Jemima Hill home afterwards.

Weddings were always well celebrated. It is told that in the late 1840's Ben Franzce mounted his horse and personally invited everyone in the area to the wedding of his sister, Sarah, to William Henson. One hundred people arrived for the wedding supper, a grand spread of undererust, overerust, and crumb bread, ham, chicken, dumplings, and pumpkin pie. The ceremony was performed by Justice James Harrell. Everything went smoothly until it began to rain. Guests were stranded for the night, and by noon the next day sixty people still jammed the small house.

By the 1850's the arrival of several well-to-do and cultured people from the east added much to the social atmosphere of the town. Parties and balls, often starting at two o'clock in the afternoon, were held in the larger homes, including that of David Allen, the Powers brothers, the Harrell House, and the Macon House.

Public programs and entertainments were without residence until Powers

Hall was built in 1856. This hall was on the third floor of the Powers block on east Main street, immediately east of the alley. Here amateur and traveling theatrical groups performed, giving Decatur a taste of histrionic life it had not experienced before. Literary societies and musical groups replaced the spelling bees and singing schools. The Decatur Musical Union was organized during these years and gave concerts of various types in Powers Hall. All large public gatherings were held there.

At one time a trial was moved from the courthouse to the hall because of the large attending crowd. It was a murder case. Richard Oglesby and Mr. Wait were prosecuting attorneys, with Abraham Lincoln allegedly representing the defendant.

Ladies of Decatur became conscious of fashion, especially if it arrived on a stylish visitor from the east. Linsey-woolsey was replaced with silks and brocades. Perk little close cottage bonnets with ribbons tied under the chin were preferred over the earlier style Gypsy hats. Beribboned ball headdresses were worn at a ball by Sheriff-elect William Wheeler in the fall of 1849, which all the important people in Decatur attended. Ladies wore their carefully preserved silk wedding dresses, braid trimmed calico, and the new stunning balzarine material, the first of its kind to appear here.

The young husbands and bachelors wore broadcloth dress coats with brass buttons, vests, butternut colored trousers and fancy pumps. Most of the men wore their hats all during the evening, and chewed tobacco. They danced the quadrille from late in the afternoon until four o'clock in the morning. Sausages, mashed potatoes, cole slaw, hot rolls and coffee were served by Mrs. Wheeler from four o'clock in the afternoon until midnight.

This ball was followed by subscription dances at the court house where Mrs. Harrell served supper on the first floor. In the winter of 1855 a masque ball was given in the Revere House for the benefit of the widows of some of the railroad workers who had been killed while working on the line. Amateur operas, theatricals, tableaux, masques, balls, and charades were very popular during these years.

One enterprising group of young blades formed a singing club which, with their melodeon, specialized in serenading attractive young ladies. Arrival group formed a brass band and serenaded simultaneously with the singing group, much to the latter's disgust.

The sewing bees, forerunner of the modern bridge club, involved a great deal of the women's time and effort. They would meet periodically early in the morning in a home to cut out coats, trousers, shirts, underwear and dresses. Other ladies baked bread, pies, cakes, and other goodies. On the following day they would all meet again to complete the work. At noon a lunch was served for the busy ladies, and at five o'clock the sewing was laid aside to prepare supper. At six the men arrived, dinner was served, and after everything was cleared away, the young people came in. Then came the fun of playing games or dancing to finish out the day which ended about midnight.

THE GOLD RUSH



When news of yellow gold in California hit Decatur in 1848 and 1849, it threw everyone into as much speculative excitement as the coming of a railroad. Stories grew with the telling of how vast amounts of gold dust and nuggets lay along the mountain streams ready to be panned. Men gathered on street corners and at the court house to repeat the stories relayed to them from the stage drivers and mail carriers.

Young men, eager for adventure and prospects of sudden wealth agreed to pool their possessions to buy equipment, wagons, and mules for the trip. Richard Oglesby, Henry Prather, and several other men struck out ahead of the rest, leaving Decatur in 1849.

Early in the morning of March 25, 1850 fifteen to twenty loaded wagons pulled into the square for a final gathering and check up before leaving. Ammunition, guns, provisions, camping outfits, picks, shovels, and miscellaneous equipment made up the wagon loads, which were all pulled by mules.

Samuel Powers, Benjamin and John Sawyer, C. H. and D. H. Garver, Anderson Draper, William and Louis Hanks, with some fifteen others waved goodbye to their wives and sweethearts, cracked their whips over the mules' backs, and started west.

Spring thaws and rains slowed down their progress considerably. By the end of the first day they had traveled only sixteen miles, reaching Illiopolis. The second night they camped at Springfield. Three weeks later they had reached Quincy where they were ferried across the Mississippi. There was a

few weeks layover at St. Joseph while the caravan waited for spring grasses to grow high enough to feed their mules and cattle. The group also was pressuring two of the larger men for a wrestling match, saying they would not continue the trip until the men fought, which the latter were reluctant to do.

On May 10 the caravan had grown to about sixty members. Their wagons pulled out across the prairie for the northwest, heading for Fort Kearney, Nebraska, and the central overland trail. Bands of Indians often circled their wagons, eyeing them curiously, then moving on. Better progress was made after they left Fort Kearney, as the prairies were dry and the trail solid under the wagon wheels. Farther and farther west they went, past Fort Laramie in Wyoming, and across the South Pass of the Rockies.

The wagons had been able to stay together so far but as they went into the desert the mules began to get sick. Men and animals suffered severely from lack of water. Wagons began going to pieces. Packs were reassembled in the good wagons pulled by the stronger mules. Groups scattered, until no more than two were together at any time for the rest of the journey. Finally all the wagons gave out and supplies were packed on the backs of the remaining mules.

Ben and John Sawyer and D. H. Garver were on one of the first two wagons to cross the Sierra Nevada mountains into California. One man rode his mule ahead of his companion to the Carson river, absorbed as much water as he could, then returned to give water to the thirsty men left behind.

In one part of the desert beyond Carson the only water they found was some that gushed boiling hot out of a rock. This made good tea for the thirsty men as well as providing water for their kegs when it cooled.

One group of the Macon county men reached Nevada City, California, on October 12, 1850, six months after leaving Decatur. Once the men reached California they sought the gold fields, suffering privation, high prices and snow in their efforts to find the big strike. Some found little gold, others a great deal. One Decatur man found a nugget worth \$16.25. The largest one he saw was found on Poor Man's Creek and was worth \$1,000. Some of the men had their money, mules, and equipment stolen by the rough characters that crowded the mining camps. Dr. Edmund Packard died there and Richard Oglesby brought back \$4,500 which he invested in Decatur land. Out of this came one of the city's finest residential areas, including Cerro Gordo and Eldorado streets.

COMING OF THE WABASH RAILROAD



The thrill of an arrival of a stage coach in Lincoln Square faded into insignificance with the prospects of the coming of the first train into Decatur in April of 1854. Everything else was forgotten with the first whistle of the puffing locomotive far down the line. Young and old gathered along the new track running west into Springfield, anxiously awaiting the realization of twenty years of effort to secure a better means of transportation in and out of their mudbound little village.

With a roar the puffing steam engine, "The Frontier," pulled up north of Decatur, which at that time was out in the country. Now there could be an advancement in agricultural production as this meant a sure means of marketing crops and livestock. More industries could be started. More enterprises would be brought in by new people. The town would grow and prosper; whereas without a railroad, it would mean stagnation and possible abandonment.

This new line was an outgrowth of the internal improvement program inaugurated by the state in 1835 when the first section of the Northern Cross was built between Quincy and Jacksonville. This line was to have extended across Illinois, through Decatur, to Danville, but had to be abandoned because of the recession of 1837. Private capital completed the line to Springfield but service was poor and by 1847 it was sold to the Great Western Railroad, which had been incorporated in 1843. This company began the completion of the line, sending surveyors into Decatur in 1852. For such an auspicious occasion the town gave a public reception for them in the brick courthouse with plenty

of food and dancing.

Despite the advantages of having a railroad into Decatur, there were many who were afraid of it. Some thought the whistling and noise would chase away all the wild game; that ranging livestock would be killed and scattered; that it would be impossible to cultivate the land because the noise would frighten their horses, and that it would mean the end of the frontier's spaciousness.

Work on the line was delayed west of Decatur because of the long fill at Steven's Creek. As there were no steam shovels to move this amount of dirt it had to be done by manpower. Picks were used to loosen the ground further west, then the dirt was shoveled into cars and wheeled to the fill. This took many men and gangs of Irish and German laborers were brought in from the east for this work. Occasions arose when these two nationalities would engage in rough disputes which often ended with fights, especially if it was after payday and they had been drinking. At one time a company of thirty Black Hawk and Mexican War veterans, armed with old flintlock muskets, was formed to quell a fight instigated by the Irish.

The Great Western later became a part of the Toledo, Wabash and Western, later called the Wabash and Western. In 1877 it was reorganized as the Wabash Railway Company and eventually established in Decatur one of the largest single yards in the state. At one time it was Decatur's largest industry, and the hub of the Wabash system.

The first roundhouse, and eight-stall building was built here in 1869. Oxen were used to switch the cars from one track to the other, this work being under the direction of John Dinneen, the first yardmaster. The Wabash did not build a station of its own until the present building was erected, but shared the building erected by the Illinois Central for many years.

CHAPTER 19

EARLY NEWSPAPERS



One of the requisites of a progressive community is a newspaper with an aggressive editor behind it. Such a man, James Shoaff, came to Decatur in the spring of 1851 to see if it had matured enough to support a news sheet. He liked the enthusiasm of the business men here, the prospects of a coming railroad and the resulting commercial expansion. He had heard of Decatur through his father-in-law, Dennis Hanks (the brother of Abraham Lincoln's mother) who had come to Decatur with the Lincolns in 1830.

James Shoaff packed up his hand press, a case of type and a few odds and ends of equipment into a wagon and moved into town. Finding an empty room in "Sons Hall" he was soon ready to publish Decatur's first newspaper.

On June 26, the first issue of **Shoaff's Family Gazette** came off the press. Nearly every person in town came, eagerly snatching up the copies before the ink was dry. Since that day to this, Decatur has not been without a newspaper. Mr. Shoaff personally acted as managing editor, reporter, circulation manager, advertising agent, printer, and newsboy. His advertising rates were \$18.00 a year for a half column and \$28.00 for a full column. The subscription price for a year was \$1.50 if paid in advance, otherwise it was \$2.00. The paper was well accepted, being both newsy and interesting. Shoaff boosted his circulation by establishing news distributors in Urbana, Taylorville, Bloomington, Clinton, Shelbyville, Jacksonville, Sullivan, and many other neighboring communities that had no newspaper of their own.

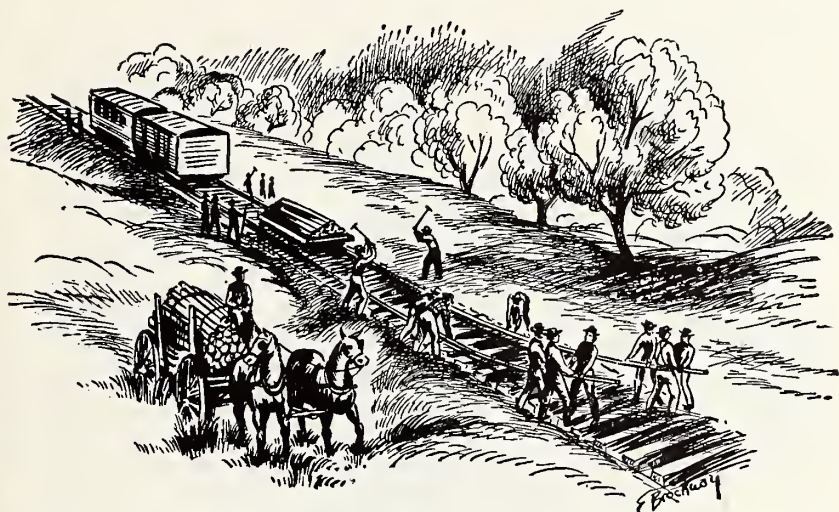
Another Decatur man, William Usrey, had planned to start a newspaper in 1851 but his equipment was not complete when Shoaff began business. Biding his time he waited until 1855 before taking action. He wanted first to see what the railroads would do for Decatur. Then with the help of Charles Wingate, began the publication of the **Illinois State Chronicle**.

After three years Mr. Shoaff changed the name of his paper to the **Decatur Weekly Gazette** and after three more years, he sold out to go into the dry goods business. After nine years of passing from one editor to another it was bought by the **Chronicle**, becoming the **Gazette-Chronicle**.

Having printers blood in his veins, Mr. Shoaff gave up the retail business to begin publication of the **Magnet**. He stayed here for several years following the Civil War, then moved on to publish the **Gazette** in Paris, Illinois.

Since the time of the **Gazette** and the **Chronicle** many newspapers have come and gone in Decatur. Some lasted only a few months, such as those published during hot political campaigns; others a few years longer, depending on the journalistic and financial abilities of the publisher. **The Herald** and **The Review** had their beginnings in the 1870's and have continued publication ever since.

ILLINOIS CENTRAL RAILROAD



After struggling twenty years to get one substantial rail line into Decatur, the city fathers popped their civic buttons when they realized there would be not one but two lines coming into the area within seven months of each other. The Illinois Central had been laying its lines southward from East Dubuque to Cairo as early as 1851.

In 1850 Congress passed what is known as the Illinois land-grant act, which gave to the state 2,595,133 acres of federal land. This was to promote the building of a railroad to extend 705 miles from Cairo to East Dubuque, with a branch line from Centralia to Chicago. In 1851 the Illinois Central railroad was incorporated and the land turned over to it by the state. In return the line was to transport government troops, mail, and miscellaneous property and to turn over 7% of its gross earnings to the state treasury.

The land lay in sections along either side of the right of way of the line and was put up for sale at \$1.25 to \$2.50 an acre. The sale of the land was to help pay for the cost of the road construction. Having a line through central Illinois opened up 11,000,000 acres of idle grass covered land which no one had previously sought to settle on. But when hopes of transportation came, this strip was soon snapped up by enterprising business men and adventurous settlers. One cattle man near Bloomington bought as much as 27,000 acres for stock raising.

The route was surveyed in 1851 and by spring of the following year construction work was in progress. The first section completed was between La-Salle and Bloomington. The first survey through Macon County was six miles west of Decatur. A movement began to change the route and through the efforts of E. O. Smith, the road was moved into Decatur. The first stake for the survey in Decatur was driven on June 6, 1851 near where the passenger station was later built. Workmen on the line stayed at the Macon House, then moved

on south through what is now Elwin and Moweaqua and its wilderness of grasses, rattlesnakes, deer, wolves and continuous rain.

Construction progressed slowly because of the hazards of weather, epidemics, and stray cattle. So many railroads were being built during the 1850's that labor became a pawn between the rival companies. Cholera and malaria broke out during the summers of '53 and '54, taking a heavy toll of working men. In Peru, 130 men died within ten days. This, plus the riots resulting from potent whisky, thinned the ranks considerably. A construction train was thrown from the track by the impact of running into a cow. Three men were killed and others injured.

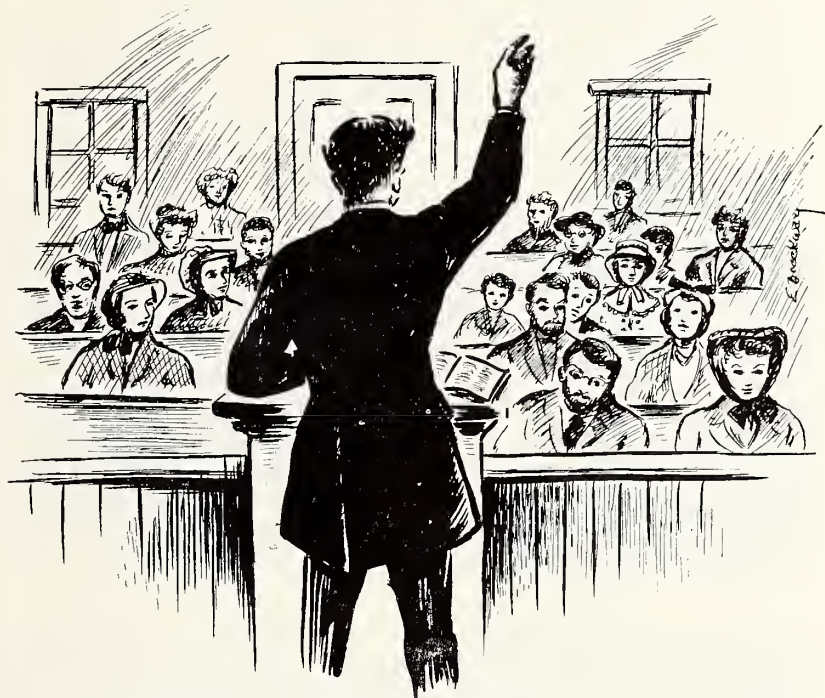
The Illinois Central built the first railway station in Decatur in 1855 on five acres of land donated by B. H. Cassell. It stood across the tracks east of the intersection of the Illinois Central and Wabash lines and was used as a Union Station until 1901 when the separate stations were put into use. It was a pretentious building for that time, a two-storied brick, with an eight-sided tower on one corner which provided a smoking room for the men. On the second floor was a twenty room hotel, called the Central House, which was well patronized by the traveling public.

This hotel was kept busy during the Civil War years when soldiers were being sent to and from the army action centers. The first floor housed the hotel office, dining room, telegraph office and baggage rooms, plus the waiting rooms for the Illinois Central and the Great Western.

The coming of these two lines was the greatest single factor in making a city out of a village in the next ten years of Decatur's existance. The new land opening up in the center of the state brought in thousands of new land owners, many of which settled in Macon County and Decatur. Businesses and small industries were attracted to this town that boasted two railways, an achievement very few other settlements could duplicate.

CHAPTER 21

DECATUR CHURCHES IN THE 1850's



With the mushrooming of Decatur following the arrival of the railroads, came the development and organization of several new churches. Although the Presbyterian church was organized in Mt. Zion in 1830 it was not until 1852 that ten members met in the home of Samuel Powers in Decatur under the leadership of David Hopkins. As with many of the new church groups a meeting place was hard to find. The brick courthouse was first used, then the Masonic hall.

As the group grew a frame building was erected in 1855 on East Main street, and in the following year they began the building of a brick church on West Prairie, on the site of the YMCA. Many festivals and dinners were given in the basement of this church to help pay for the finishing which took three years. This building was in continuous use until 1890-91 when the present church was built under the direction of Rev. W. H. Penhallegan. A second Presbyterian church of the "New School General Assembly" was organized in 1868, meeting in Powers Hall.

Rev. Father Pendergast held the first Catholic services in Decatur in 1854 in a frame house on West Main. Services were later held in the brick courthouse and at private residences until 1857 when Father Cussack raised enough money to build a frame church on West Prairie. The cornerstone of the first brick church was laid on March 17, 1863 and it was occupied the following year.

This building was used until the present one was erected in 1910.

The first parochial school in Decatur for Catholic children was conducted by Miss Shepherd in the late 1850's in a home on West Prairie, then on West Main. In 1866 the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary opened St. Theresa's school. They were followed by the Ursaline Sisters who helped convert a hotel building on East Eldorado into a school for girls.

St. John's Episcopal Church had its beginning in a lower room of the old Masonic hall in 1855 with fifteen members. This room was used as a school room during the week and as other church groups met here the St. John's group had to meet at 1:00 p. m., with no books to sing from and no organ. If the minister preached too long the next group had to wait outside until he was finished. By 1858 they met in a store room on North Water where the luxury of benches, platform and communion rail were provided. A new church was built in the fall of 1858 at East North and North Water streets which was the center of parish life for over thirty years.

The Antioch Baptist Church was started in 1858 with fourteen members, the United Brethren in 1856 by Rev. M. Ambrose with seven members, the Universalist Church in 1854 with nine members, and the Church of God in 1857 by Elder A. J. Fenton with eleven members. The Christians, Baptists, and Methodist all built new brick churches during the 1850's resulting from some of the work of the circuit riders who held services in the area at least every two weeks.

Many converts were brought into churches through the zealous preaching of these ministers, who urged all to be "united in brotherly love to fight the devil in his stronghold." Revival meetings were well attended during the winter and summer months. Although denominational favoritism was strong, often causing conflicts between groups and individuals, these were forgotten as wagonloads of people enjoyed Sunday afternoons by going home with each other for dinner. Men discussed crops and horse trades, and the women compared styles, sunbonnet patterns and experiences with the dye pot.

The religious fever of these early groups set a pattern of moral stability for Decatur which has continued down to the present time.

DECATUR AS A BRICK MAKING CENTER



The scarcity of adequate building materials was one of the drawbacks in commercial and residential construction in early Decatur, despite the amount of timber in the area. A few adventuresome men started a brick works using Decatur clay in the early 1830's but it was said that "it could be picked to pieces with a darning needle."

The old jail and a building on South Main street, used by the Dewees brothers who were brick masons, were the first brick buildings in Decatur. After these first efforts it became evident that Decatur clay was not suitable for brick making. The court house, Stamper and Condell's store, the Macon House and the Franklin street stores, the Masonic hall, the Peddecord, Cassell, and Dr. Read's residence were made of brick from Edgar county, which all had to be hauled into Decatur in ox wagons.

In 1852 William Martin located in Decatur and set about testing Decatur clay for brick making, despite the failure of the early yards. He filled a large box with clay dug from the corner of Broadway and Decatur streets and took it to St. Louis as baggage on the stage coach. Here it was tested in every imaginable way and declared "good brick." Martin brought it back and put "Brick made in Decatur" on exhibition in E. O. Smith's store window.

No business man shared his enthusiasm enough to finance a yard so Martin went again to St. Louis and returned with an ox wagon and two horse wagons loaded with four men and their household goods, spades, moulds, and other equipment for brick making. The men were skilled brick makers and soon set to work. Mr. Martin financed the project until it got started and then

sold the land and the holdings to Ben Metz, one of the brick makers. The yard lay between Broadway and Webster, from Decatur to Lawrence streets.

The clay was first pulverized and mixed with spades, which were later replaced by a machine whose motive power was an old blind horse. When the clay was properly tempered, it was cut into pieces of an appropriate size, rolled in sand and placed in a sand mold, two bricks in each mold. After they were turned out of the mold they had to be turned over periodically, stood on edge, and watched carefully so they would dry evenly. The men worked in gangs of four, and each gang turned out 3,000 bricks a day. Later, moulds for three bricks were used and "slop" brick, those made in a wet mold, were made. These were then fired in a beehive type kiln.

The first building using this new brick was the barn foundation of the H. C. Johns farm and the house which crowned Johns' Hill in 1852-53. Soon after this many substantial buildings went up; large dwellings, churches, and business houses, the most important being the William Powers block, a three storied brick which stood on East Main street in 1856. Mr. Powers also erected a building at the southeast corner of Main and Water streets, and James Millikin put up one across the street in 1858. The first brick sidewalk was laid in 1856 around what is now the Bachrach corner on Lincoln Square.

Since Metz's venture, several brick making plants came into being in Decatur and flourished. Great quantities of brick were shipped out and some of our own brick makers went to other cities to establish new plants. The old yard on Broadway eventually expired and other clay beds were worked in what is now Fairlawn Cemetery, Nelson Park and Lincoln Park.

CHAPTER 23

BANKING HISTORY



Early residents of Decatur, struggling to produce enough surplus for themselves and to barter, had little reason for wanting a place to safeguard the meager amount of cash they had. But as businesses thrived and money began accumulating, people became reluctant to carry their silver and gold about in their pockets, or to leave it in coffee jars at home.

One of the respected men of the community was J. J. Peddecord, who operated a general store and packing plant in Decatur. People began coming to him with their money, which he placed in envelopes marked with their names and kept in a locked drawer in his store on East Main street. By the 1850's the money had accumulated to such an extent that Mr. Peddecord was forced to buy a safe, as he was astounded upon counting his deposits to find that he was handling \$20,000.

Taking stock of his store business, which wasn't too thriving at the time, he and his partner, L. L. Burrows, set up a banking firm of Peddecord and Burrows, in a second story room on Water street in 1852. A checking system was established and interest rates set. In 1858 they moved to a ground floor room on South Park. In 1878 they occupied a room at the corner of Water and South Park where they remained until 1912. The back room of this bank was for many years the unofficial gentlemen's club of Decatur. Prominent men of importance met to discuss politics, business, civic affairs, and to listen to Dick Oglesby's stories and Jasper Peddecord's dry wit. Almost every movement

of importance to Decatur's progress was first discussed in this back room.

In 1857 William Martin became a partner, but retired in 1859. William Boyd who entered the firm in 1878 died in 1889. After the death of Mr. Peddecord in 1899 the bank was known as the L. Burrows & Co. bank and later merged with the National Bank of Decatur.

Several other banks started up in the 1850's and 1860's but did not survive, including the Fuller & Hatch bank on East Main street, the Railroad bank on Merchant, and the First National at Water and the New Square.

A week following the failure of the Railroad bank, during the uncertain period preceding the hostilities between the North and South, James Millikin took over the room and equipment of the defunct Railroad bank, put up a sign "James Millikin, Banker," and started business. Many people had lost money through the earlier bank failure and were reluctant to patronize the new venture. For the next twenty years the new bank struggled along until it gradually grew into one of the strongest banks in the state.

Mr. Millikin invested heavily in real estate, not only in Illinois but in thousands of acres in Iowa. He was a member of the firm which operated the Union Iron Works, and later invested in Louisiana canal and rice companies. He furnished money to many Decatur business men to tide them over the critical times. He served as a city alderman and as a member of the board of supervisors.

He founded and helped to maintain the Millikin University, gave generously to the Decatur and Macon County Hospital, the Girls Welfare Home, the Anna B. Millikin home, the Art Institute, the Day Nursery, the YWCA, and many other institutions. The present bank, built in 1897 at East Main and Water streets, plays a large part in maintaining and promoting charitable and educational work in Decatur through the legacy of Mr. Millikin's will.

CHAPTER 24

CAMP MEETINGS



Religious camp meetings held in the summer time in early Decatur and neighboring communities were the big social and evangelistic events of the year, where friends met, old acquaintances renewed, and new friendships formed. Families packed their wagons with cooking and sleeping equipment, donned their best clothes and came to a camping area to spend several days to a week together.

Camp sites were located where there was plenty of shade, good water, grass, and adequate drainage. After the site was chosen, the brush and weeds were cleared away, a speaker's stand was erected, seats were made, shacks and tents constructed and lights provided. If tenting materials were not available, an arbor of twigs and branches was built for the main pavilion, which gave protection for the worshipers from the rain and hot sun. Families found camping spots where tents or lean-to's were put up, their cooking utensils set up and their horses watered and fed. Around the evening camp fires men talked about their crops, community development and political news. Women brought their fancy work, taught each other new stitches and designs, worked on patch quilts, exchanged flower and garden seeds and the year's accumulated news.

After everyone was settled the camp was dedicated. Before breakfast, services were held, usually a prayer meeting, then preaching from ten to twelve, and again preaching in the afternoon. The night meeting was the largest service of the day as visitors came out from town who could not attend the daytime meetings. Preachers of that day denounced sin and wickedness in no uncertain words, giving vivid and forceful descriptions of eternal hell and damnation.

Worshippers experienced the emotions of repentance, sorrow, joy and anguish with prayers, songs and shouts.

Many new converts were added to the church during these times, which gave the local groups a substantial boost in membership. Future churches were built on many of these camp grounds, such as those at Boiling Springs, Mt. Zion, North Fork, Friends Creek, Mt. Gilead, and the Methodist group at Steven's Creek which later moved on into Decatur.

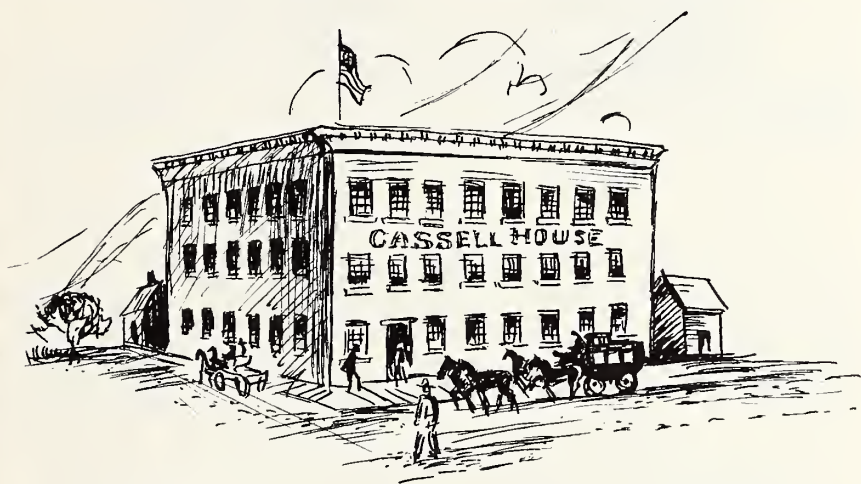
Attendance increased at the camps through the years and larger and more permanent auditoriums were built. The last big camp in Macon County was the Oakland park camp where Millikin University now stands. This park, sponsored by the Citizen's Street Railway company, which built a horse car line out West Main street to the Wabash tracks, was popular in the 1880's for big gatherings and entertainment purposes. Previously this land was rented out as a pasture but after the car line was put in operation it was named Oakland Park and became the site of the first Chautauqua and the largest camp meeting ever held in this part of the country.

A canvas pavilion was erected which could seat 8,000 people and a large dining hall where 500 could be fed. People came from far and near, by wagon, buggy, and horse car to attend meetings, especially on Sundays, when at one time a count of 30,000 attendance was made. Camp meetings lasted for ten days at this camp. Music, lectures, and educational features made up the programs. Albert Smith, Oakland camp manager, was the leading prohibitionist of this area and for ten years he held the national temperance encampments at Oakland.

Such speakers as John Finch of Nebraska, George Bain of Kentucky, John Gaugh of Maine, John St. John of Kansas, and Mrs. Helen Gaugher thrilled thousands of visitors.

CHAPTER 25

DECATUR — BIRTHPLACE OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY



(Cassell House — Birthplace of the Republican Party)

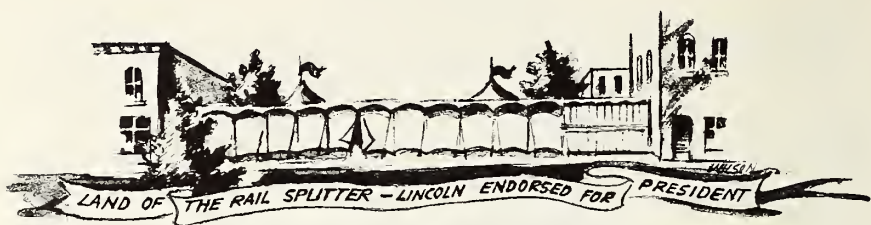
When legislation was introduced in Congress to emasculate the Missouri Compromise and expand slavery into Nebraska Territory it brought about a chain reaction. Dissident groups held meetings throughout the north in opposition to expansion of slavery but when the Act became law on May 30, 1854, these groups dissolved, their cause having been lost. This, too, was the death of the Whig Party.

An Editor's Convention was called by Paul Selby, Editor of the Morgan County Journal, Jacksonville and W. J. Usrey, Editor of the Illinois State Chronicle of Decatur to meet in the Cassell House, Decatur on February 22, 1856 for the purpose of forming a new party to be known as the Republican Party.

Abraham Lincoln entered with zeal into the organizing of this new party and consulted with the committee on resolutions with the result that a platform was adopted clearly embodying the principles finally enumerated by the National Republican Party. A banquet was given in the parlor of the Cassell House at which the infant was christened and Mr. Lincoln, who was a guest, made the speech of the evening.

Note: The Cassell House stood on the parking lot directly in front of the present St. Nicholas Hotel on Lincoln Square, near the site where the Lincoln family spent their first night in Decatur in 1830.

Decatur, therefore, proudly claims the honor of being the Birthplace of the Republican Party. No one would disavow the claim that the Immortal Abe as the Father of the Party and he cannot be divorced from it.



THE WIGWAM

Lincoln received his greatest acclaim in Macon County on May 10, 1860 when the state Republican party, holding its convention in the Wigwam on State street, endorsed him as the native son candidate for the presidency. His nomination came a short time later at the national convention in Chicago at another structure also named the Wigwam after that one in Decatur.

Reproduced here is a copy of a newspaper story from the Decatur Herald & Review and a statement by Abe Kramer, an eye witness to the convention. It is interesting to note that six rails were used instead of the two rails that later histories have commonly noted.

THE LINCOLN RAIL

(Statement of Abe Kramer)

The first Republican State Convention was held in the "Wigwam" erected behind the Millikin Bank in May, 1860. The carriage shop of Abe Kramer was on the S. E. corner of S. Franklin and E. Main Streets. The back door of the "Wigwam" was on E. Main Street.

Before the convention John Hanks and Richard Oglesby brought to the Oglesby barn six walnut rails. The following morning Isaac Jennings and John Hanks took the rails to Jennings' carpentry shop near the Presbyterian Church. There they nailed a banner to two of the rails. The two then carried the rails to the carriage shop where they awaited a signal from the back door of the "Wigwam." Upon the nomination the signal was given, and the men entered the back door with the rails. They threw the rails with a clatter on the platform, lifted up the banner and paraded around the hall.

These rails had been split by Lincoln and John Hanks in the winter of 1830-1831 in Macon County. It is from these rails that Lincoln received the name of the "Rail Splitter Candidate." After the convention the banner and rails were returned to the carriage shop.

There, John Hanks sold one rail for \$5.00 to a man from Kentucky. The other rail was cut into three sections. Abe Kramer kept his section of rail in his home from 1860 until 1912. Upon the election of his nephew, Charles M. Borchers, to the 63rd Congress, Abe Kramer gave him his portion of the rail. It has hung on the wall in the Borchers' home from 1912 to date. The fate of the other four rails is unknown.

Lincoln Rails Carried By Father of Mrs. Haines.

Thomas B. Shoaff of Shelbyville in Decatur Friday to attend the funeral of Mrs. Mary Haines said:

BROUGHT IN RAILS

"I remember the day her father, Isaac Jennings, and John Hanks brought the rails into the Republican state convention in the Wigwam on South State street in 1860, and thereby, I am quite sure, brought about the instruction of the delegates from Illinois to the national Republican convention that resulted in the nomination of Lincoln as a candidate for president.

"My father, James Shoaff, was publishing the paper in Decatur then. I was thirteen years old. I went with him to the convention. It had gone along about as conventions do. Yates had been nominated as the candidate for governor. Dick Oglesby was taking an active part in the convention. Just as Yates was nominated, John Hanks and Isaac Jennings came marching in the door with a half dozen rails on their shoulders. On top was a banner saying:

"'These rails have been cut by Abraham Lincoln.'

ALL STOOD UP

"There was a great interest among all the delegates and everybody stood up to see what was going on as the two men marched down the aisle and threw the rails on the floor in front of the platform.

"Oglesby got up and began to make a speech, saying:

"'These are rails that have been cut by Lincoln from the Whitley farm, the old Lincoln home place southwest of Decatur.'

"I remember distinctly how Lincoln looked as he got up on the platform, walked to the front of the platform, and looked at the rails. Somebody said to him:

"'Did you cut those rails?'

"He said:

LOOKED LIKE THEM

"'John Hanks and I did split some rails there on the place. If these are not the very same rails, they look very much like them!'"

(Story from Decatur Herald & Review)

CHAPTER 27

CENTRAL PARK AND FAIRVIEW PARK



"There should be a place in the city where mothers and their children might rest out of the sun and where the children could play."

With this philanthropic thought Captain David Allen and Dr. T. H. Read gave the land which comprises Central Park to Decatur on July 10, 1855. When the Illinois Central and Northern Cross railroads were first proposed, Capt. Allen offered this area to the city as a site for a railroad station, but after the failure of these early projects the idea of a park resulted. It stood for many years, hilly, covered with hazel brush and weeds, inhabited by hogs and snakes.

Known as the "new square," the city had hitching racks built around it for the benefit of the farmers who came to town. Gradually the hollows were filled, as dirt was hauled in from excavations from new buildings in the neighborhood. In 1859 a number of trees were set out and the weeds cleaned out. In June of 1876 the hitching racks were removed and gravel walks laid. Lower Burrows, lover of beautiful things, purchased a fountain* at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia and had it installed in the area. On July 3, 1877 the square was opened "for the enjoyment of the public," being officially christened, "Central Park."

The park saw some exciting times during the Civil War when soldiers mustered out here before heading south.

The original forty acres, now known as Fairview Park, was laid out in 1857 as the fairgrounds for the new Macon County Agricultural Society which

*The fountain remained in the park until 1930 when it was moved to the waterworks grounds to make room for the M. L. Harry Memorial in Central Park.

was organized on June 28, 1856, with E. A. Jones as president. The front twenty acres were bought for \$600, the back twenty for \$150. The society contracted farmers and tradesmen in the area, encouraging them to enter their finest produce in the fall show. A tight board fence was built around the forty acres, and enough timber was cleared away to make room for an ampitheatre, which seated 5,000 people, a farm products hall, a mechanical and industrial hall, a fine arts hall, stalls for 500 cattle and pens for 500 hogs. A good water supply came from six springs on the grounds.

The first fair opened on October 9-10, and from that time until 1884 county fairs were held each year with the exceptions of 1863, 1864, 1869, and 1870, when the Illinois state fairs were held here. Great crowds attended these occasions, despite the fact that a Civil War was going on. In 1858 one of the unusual features of the fair was a ladies horseback exhibition where thirteen women "rode gracefully, with much ease and creditably to themselves."

In 1869 the society sold the grounds to Macon County for \$6,500 and in 1890 it was leased to the city, being called Fairview Park. In 1903 the city bought it, later adding the acres which now make up the park.

Decatur grew from an easy going, raw-boned frontier village to a hustling, busy city by the end of the Civil War, when its ante-bellum days were over. Railroads had intersected the city, bringing trade and communication with the rest of Illinois and the surrounding states. They also brought progressive business people who fired Decatur's industrial enthusiasm. In 1855 a city charter was granted and the 600 population set to work to make this a progressive spot on the map.

The lumber yard, started by Joseph Mills, produced lumber for Kramer and McClelland, makers of wagons, carriages and buggies, and other building contractors. Priest and Company operated a flour and feed mill, Morehouse and Wells opened a store, Hieronymus Mueller opened a gunsmith and repair shop (now the Mueller Company on Eldorado), the Decatur Woolen Mills began operation under Boyd, Haskell and Company, and many other businesses got their start during these years, many of which are still in operation.

Following the war, in which Decatur and its residents played an active part, the city settled down to readjust and look to the future. Politics and the men involved became the center of interest. R. J. Oglesby was made governor of Illinois in 1865 with General Jesse H. Moore going to Congress in 1868.

Gas lights, new churches, increased railroad activity, the Haworth factory, the Union Iron works, mills, a steam laundry (which later became Normans), the Linn & Scruggs store, lawyers, real estate firms, and even circuses, all became part of the Decatur of the 1860's upon which was built the improvements of coming years. Little by little it prospered, adding and subtracting its businesses and populace, but always progressing.

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Notes









Lincoln's presidency
started here



an illinois tour
does too...

Lincoln's presidency
started here



an illinois tour
does too...

abraham lincoln and macon county

Four days after Abraham Lincoln's 21st birthday, he and his family, and others set out from Spencer County, Indiana, for Illinois. This journey in early 1830 was prompted by word from Lincoln's cousin, John Hanks, who urged the Lincoln family to join him in Macon County. After a two-week trip by covered wagon, the Lincolns arrived in Decatur and spent their first afternoon here near the southeast corner of the public square which now bears Lincoln's name. (A tablet marking this site may be seen on the west wall of Enloe's Drug Store.) In 1831 Lincoln made his first political speech from this same location.

At the suggestion of John Hanks, the Lincolns settled on the banks of the Sangamon River, south of Harristown and seven miles west of Decatur. (This site is now Lincoln Trail Home Site State Park. See map.) The cabin, set some 100 feet back from the Sangamon River, was built and the family began clearing the land. As soon as the house was finished, Abraham started splitting rails to fence ten acres of ground and it was this work that earned for him the name of the "Rail Splitter," a term that stayed with him during his political career.

After a bitter winter, part of the Lincoln family moved in 1831 to Coles County where they built again. Abraham and John Hanks left Decatur in canoes, going down the Sangamon to Springfield where they loaded flatboats with produce and traveled down the waterways to New Orleans.

Abraham Lincoln returned to Macon County about a decade later as a young struggling lawyer. He was in the area many times on law cases as he traveled the Judicial Circuit which included Macon County.

In the middle of the 1850s, a group of men in the state began to voice concern over the spread of slavery into the new territories of the West. A meeting was called in Decatur in 1856 to organize a new political force to try to stop the slavery movement across the United States. Abraham Lincoln was one of the organizers of this force, which was later to become a leading power in the formation of the Republican Party and its platforms.

Lincoln received his greatest acclaim in Macon County on May 10, 1860, when the state Republican Party, holding its convention in the Wigwam on State Street, endorsed him as a candidate for the presidency. The first "official" announcement of Lincoln's candidacy was found in a resolution adopted at this meeting. The resolution, in part, read: "Resolved, that Abraham Lincoln is the first choice of Illinois for the Presidency . . ." From this start he became the "Rail Splitter Candidate" and a short time later he was nominated at the national convention in Chicago.

history in brief

decatur and macon county illinois

The natural beauty of the central Illinois area temporarily attracted explorers Father Marquette and Louis Joliet away from their planned journey up the Illinois River in the 1670s and as a result they took a side trip into what is now Central Illinois. Not realizing that the area was held by the Spanish who considered it a part of Florida, these travelers claimed the territory, including what is now Decatur and Macon County, for the French. After going through Spanish, French, and British hands, this land finally was conquered for Virginia by George Rogers Clark. In 1784, the area was ceded to the United States as part of the Northwest Territory, then broken into five states of Indiana, Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan and Illinois.

In 1818 the present boundaries of Illinois were fixed and it became a state, but most of its 35,000 residents were scattered along the Illinois, Wabash and Ohio rivers, leaving the interior of the state to a few Indian tribes.

The Decatur area was neither the site of an Indian village, nor even crossed by the more important trails, but the area was used by Indians as a hunting and fishing ground after the initial white settlements. The first house built by white men within the present limits of Macon County was erected about 1816 by the Lartioniere brothers, operators of an Indian trading post about 11 miles northeast of Decatur.

The area's first permanent settlement was started in about 1822 by Leonard Stevens who built a home about three miles northwest of Decatur, near a stream which now has his name. By 1828 the area was populated enough by settlers to justify dividing the larger counties into smaller ones and in 1829 an act was passed which led to the formation of Macon County. It was cut from portions of Shelby, DeWitt, Piatt and Moultrie counties and named for the Honorable Nathaniel Macon, an American statesman and a Congressman who had served in the U.S. House and Senate for 33 years.

After the formation of Macon County in January, 1829, the next step was the establishment of a county seat. By July, the town of Decatur was surveyed and laid out on a 20 acre tract by Benjamin Austin. By the Spring of 1834, Decatur had 11 buildings — seven family dwellings, two store buildings, one court house and a jail. In addition, a dam had been built across the Sangamon River and a grist mill and a sawmill were opened. In 1855 a city charter was granted and the 600 citizens began working harder to make Decatur a dynamic community.

The availability of rail transportation was the real stimulation for the area's growth. In 1855 Decatur could boast that it had two major railroads providing transportation in all four directions. This intersection of the Illinois Central and the Great Western (later called the Wabash) railroads was the greatest single factor in the making of a city out of a village.

The railroads brought people and businesses, and opened up the center of the state for thousands of people, many of whom settled in Macon County. Other communities sprang up in the county and today the population of Macon County is about 130,000.



HISTORIC LINCOLN SQUARE

The early village of Decatur was planned around this public square and in the winter of 1830 the Lincoln family camped here on the way to the land just west of Decatur on the banks of the Sangamon River.

This was the site of the first courthouse of Macon County and it was just off this square that Lincoln made his first political speech as a young man in 1831. Lincoln later practiced law in the second courthouse in the square when he traveled this Judicial Circuit.

Years after Lincoln's assassination, this square was named in his honor.

SITE OF THE CASSELL HOUSE

The southwest corner of Lincoln Square was the site of one of Decatur's first inns — the Cassell House. It was here, in 1856, that the famous Anti-Nebraska Editors meeting was held, and work was done on the organization that ultimately was to become part of the National Republican Party.



THE WIGWAM --- SITE OF THE ILLINOIS REPUBLICAN CONVENTION OF 1860

In this block of South State Street, a crude wood and canvas amphitheater was built in 1860 to house the 5,000 delegates to the Illinois Republican Party Convention. The structure was called the Wigwam. Abraham Lincoln was first mentioned for the presidency of the United States at this convention by Richard J. Oglesby, who later became the only three-time governor of the State of Illinois.



SITE OF POST No. 1 OF THE GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC

In a second floor print shop in a building that once stood on this spot, the first post of the Grand Army of the Republic was established on April 6, 1866. From this small beginning grew a nationwide, and once politically-influential, veterans organization. A statue in Central Park is dedicated to the founding of the G.A.R.

MACON COUNTY MUSEUM

This new museum is on the fifth floor of the Macon County Building and is open every day except Saturday and Sunday. Visitors are asked to contact the county clerk's office in the basement of the building. The items on display are changed periodically.



GREAT WESTERN MILL

The nucleus of the Great Western Mill at the corner of Cerro Gordo and Water Streets was built in 1856 and later became the largest mill in Central Illinois. From these beginnings, Decatur's present grain mills have grown to earn for it the title of "Soybean Capital of the World."

OGLESBY HOME

At 421 West William Street is the Richard J. Oglesby home. The only three-time governor of the State of Illinois built this house in the late 1870s. It is a fine example of the architecture of this period. This house is **not** open to the public.



FIRST COURTHOUSE

A reproduction of the first courthouse in Macon County stands in Fairview Park. The original building was built in 1829, and Abraham Lincoln tried one case in the log courthouse which was also used as a social center of the community.

LARTONIERE TRADING POST

was operated by René and Antoine Lartoniére near the juncture of the Sangamon River and Friends Creek, between the years of 1809 and 1826. These men established a trade with the "Prairie Band" of the Kickapoo Indians who controlled the Sangamon River Valley. At that time these traders were the only white men allowed



in Kickapoo territory. The Kickapoos needed the goods that these traders exchanged for wild animal pelts. After the power of the Kickapoo was broken and the area opened to settlement, the Lartoniére brothers abandoned the post.

BOILING SPRINGS CEMETERY

Off of Route 121 on the northwestern edge of Decatur, this cemetery contains the grave of John Hanks, Abraham Lincoln's cousin who asked the Lincolns to come to Illinois. He also helped stage the demonstration that brought about Lincoln's nomination to the presidency.



LINCOLN TRAIL HOME SITE STATE PARK

Seven miles west of Decatur, turn south off of U. S. 36, is the site of the first Lincoln home in Illinois. The family lived here on the banks of the Sangamon River in 1830 and 1831. This park, maintained by the State, allows camping within its boundaries. It is also the beginning of the Lincoln Heritage Canoe Trail, which ends at New Salem.



WARNICK CABIN OR 33 MILE HOUSE

This old structure on County Highway 28, near the Lincoln Trail Home Site State Park was built by Col. William Warnick in 1833. In later years this building served as a roadside tavern on the old Springfield Road which passed in front of it. It is a good example of early pioneer architecture.

1S -- GREENWOOD CEMETERY Greenwood Cemetery is an early community cemetery and within it are buried many prominent citizens of early Central Illinois. Of particular interest are the Oglesby family plot; Gen. Jesse Moore's grave; the G.A.R. plot; the Tupper memorial, erected by the citizens of Decatur and Macon County for two local Civil War heroes

2S -- STEPHEN DECATUR In the 800 block West Main Street on the grounds of the former James Millikin home, now the Decatur Art Center, is a statue of Commodore Stephen Decatur, the Naval hero for whom Decatur was named.

3S -- LINCOLN STATUES There are three Lincoln statues in Decatur. Lincoln as a lawyer, is at the front entrance of the County Building; Lincoln at the age of 21, on the Campus of Millikin University, 1200 block W. Main Street and Lincoln's first political speech as a young man, in Lincoln Square

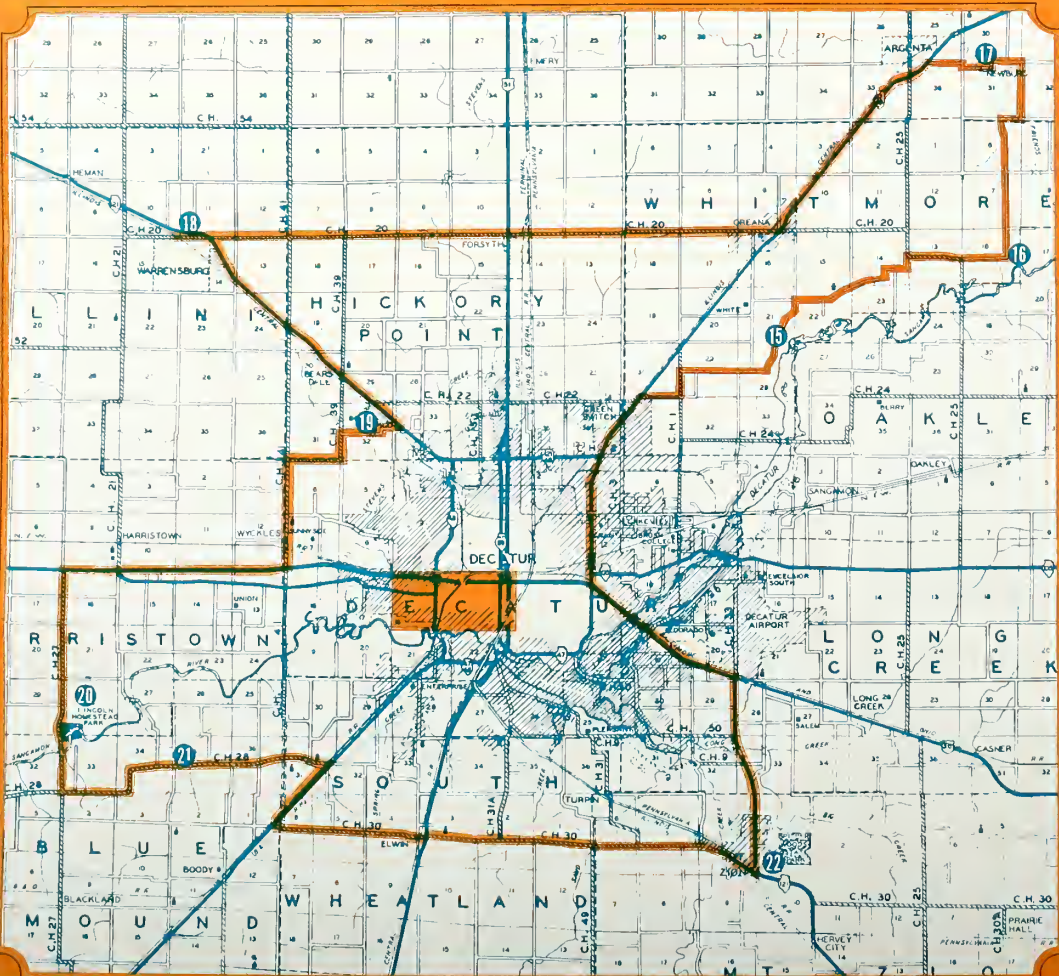
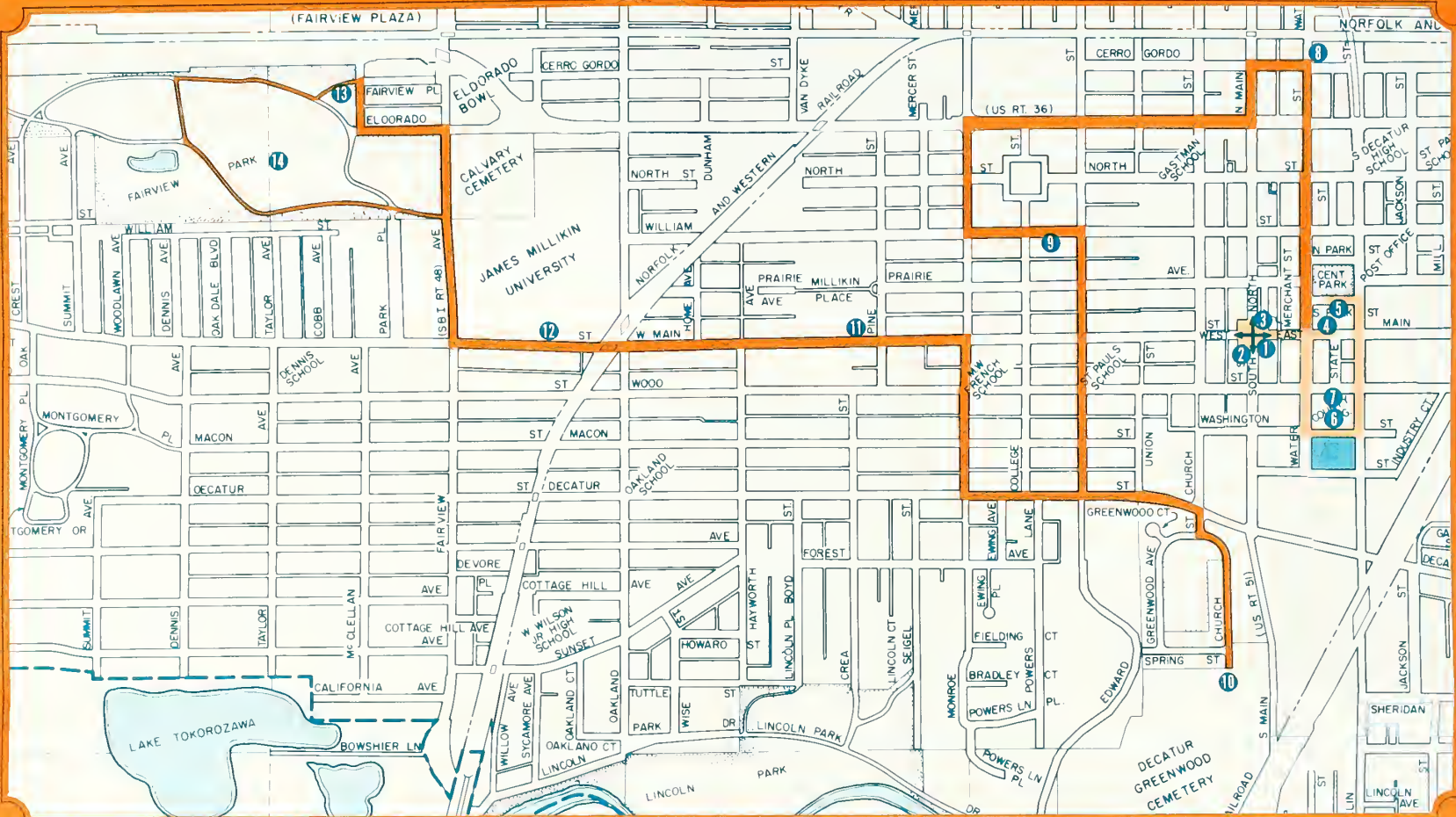
4S -- CAMP MACON — CIVIL WAR TRAINING GROUND This is located below the large pavilion in Fairview Park. During the Civil War this is where Macon County soldiers mustered in and began their training. In the early years that followed the Civil War, this area was the site of several Grand Army of the Republic encampments, one of which was attended by Generals Grant and Sherman.

5S -- NEWBERG AND DANTOWN One-quarter of a mile east of Argenta are the sites of two early communities in Macon County which were abandoned when the Illinois Central railroad re-routed its lines away from the towns of Newberg and Dantown. Most residents of these villages moved to the new town of Argenta, established along the right-of-way of the railroad

6S -- OLD STAGE ROAD TO MONTICELLO & CHAMPAIGN Just north of Fairies Park one can follow portions of the old Stage Road around the northern bank of the Sangamon River. These early roads were built near the rivers and meandered around the creeks and ravines. Later highways were built across the prairies and the early river roads were abandoned

7S -- SHELBYVILLE MDRAINE On the northwestern edge of Warrensburg northwest of Decatur, on Route 121 is a glacial moraine formed by the Tazwell Advance of the Wisconsin Glacier. This was the termination point of this glacier about 20,000 years ago. In the valley to the northwest below this low ridge is some of the richest farmland in the world, called "Polliwog."

8S -- SPITLER WOODS STATE PARK This large wooded area is an example of the forest and timber that once covered much of Central Illinois. Free Camping is allowed in this park





SUGGESTED PARKING

WALKING TOUR

AUTO TOUR

- 1 Historic Lincoln Square
- 2 Site of The Cassell House
- 3 (35) Lincoln Statue (Square)
- 4 The Wigwag-Site of the Illinois Republican Convention of 1860
- 5 Site of Past No. 1 of the Grand Army of the Republic
- 6 Macon County Museum
- 7 (35) Lincoln Statue (Courthouse)
- 8 Great Western Mill
- 9 Oglesby Home
- 10 (15) Greenwood Cemetery
- 11 (25) Stephen Decatur Statue
- 12 (35) Lincoln Statue (Millikin)
- 13 First Courthouse
- 14 (45) Comp Mocan-Civil War Training Ground
- 15 (65) Old Stage Road to Monticello and Chompaig
- 16 Lartioniere Trading Post
- 17 (55) Newberg and Dantawn
- 18 (75) Shelbyville Moraine
- 19 Bailing Springs Cemetery
- 20 Lincoln Trail Home Site State Park
- 21 Warnick Cabin or 33 Mile House
- 22 (85) Spilfer Woods State Park



Commodore Stephen Decatur

decatur . . . a friendly, moderate-sized community in the center of Illinois, offers ideal facilities for conventions from 2 to 2,000 people. Over 1,400 modern hotel and motel rooms await you. And there are large meeting and banquet rooms to fit your special needs. Unlimited free municipal parking privileges and entertainment ranging from outdoor sports to legitimate theater and ball-room dancing. For the wives, our staff of gracious women guides will arrange escorted visits to historical sites, unusual industries and smart shopping areas. Decatur extends to you convenience, warmth and pleasure at one of the lowest per diem rates in Illinois. Let us help you make your arrangements for your next convention.

MOTELS AND HOTELS

AMBASSADOR MOTOR INN

141 South Main

VOYAGER INN

3035 N. Water

COLONIAL MOTEL

1204 W. Grand

HOLIDAY INN

450 E. Pershing

HOTEL ORLANDO

Water & Wood Sts.

IMPERIAL 400

351 South Water

LAKEVIEW MOTEL

Rt. 36 East

MOTEL ORLANDO

1804 Rt. 51 South



MOTOR HOTEL

555 Front St.

SANDY'S MOTEL

1675 E. Pershing

SHOPPING CENTERS

BRETTWOOD VILLAGE

3112 N. Water

FAIRVIEW PLAZA

1400 W. King

PUBLISHED BY

The Decatur Chamber of Commerce, the Decatur Downtown Council, The Decatur Hotel-Motel Association and the Merchants of Fairview Plaza and Brettwood Village Shopping Centers.

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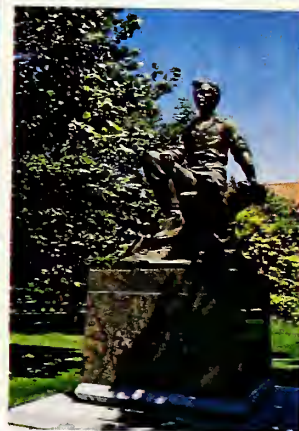
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DECATUR, ILLINOIS

Item available in the Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection at the
Allen County Public Library, Fort Wayne, Indiana

For contact information, go to www.LincolnCollection.org.

THE WIGWAM
MAY - 10 - 1860
DECATUR, ILLINOIS

LAND OF THE RAIL SPLITTER - LINCOLN ENDORSED FOR PRESIDENT

HERITAGE COMMITTEE, INC.
DECATUR, ILLINOIS

DEDICATION WIGWAM SITE

Saturday, July 25, 1970, 10:45 a.m.
100 block South Park St., opposite south side of Central Park
Decatur, Illinois

Master of Ceremonies

Representative Webber Borchers, Treasurer
Lincoln Statue Fund-Heritage Committee, Inc.

Presentation of the Colors

Boy Scout Troop 20, John E. Johnson, Scoutmaster

Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

Boy Scout Troop 20, Cub Scout Troop 57
Illioopolis, Girl Scout Troop 32, Lead by
Nat'l DAR Flag Chairman, Mrs. Paul C. Meyer

Star Spangled Banner - Solo

Howard Brown, Sup't of Macon County
Educational Service Region

Organist

Gene Monson, Monson Funeral Home

Invocation

Rev. Robert D. Walters, First Lutheran Church

Welcome

Representative Webber Borchers

Comments

Roy Chapman, Sr. Vice President
First National Bank of Decatur

Dedication Speaker

Dr. Wayne Temple, Illinois State Archivist

Dedication of Marker

Mrs. Robert W. Bills, State Historian NSDAR

Unveiling of Bas Relief and Marker

Florence White, Heritage Committee, Inc.
Mrs. John J. Loftus, DAR

Presentation of Marker to Heritage
Committee, Inc.

Mrs. Darrall M. Abel, Historian,
Stephen Decatur Chapter DAR

Acceptance of Marker from DAR and
Presentation of bas relief and
Marker to City of Decatur

Amelia D. Mulrooney, President,
Heritage Committee, Inc.

Acceptance

Mayor James Rupp

Battle Hymn of the Republic

Howard Brown

Benediction

Rt. Rev. Msgr. George Powell

The First National Bank of Decatur generously donated the site for placing
of bas relief and marker.

Wigwam Celebration Luncheon

Hotel Orlando - July 25, 1970

Master of Ceremonies	Representative Webber Borchers
Invocation	Rt. Rev. Msgr. George Powell
Welcome	Webber Borchers
Introduction of Guests	
Remarks	Mayor James Rupp
Introduction of DAR guests	Mrs. Carl Birk, Regent Stephen Decatur Chapter DAR
Remarks	Charles Hamm, Supervisor, Region of Tourism
Speaker	George L. Cashman, Curator of Lincoln Tomb
Remarks	Amelia D. Mulrooney, President Heritage Committee
Benediction	Rev. Robert D. Walters, First Lutheran Church

Organizations Represented

Illinois State Archives - Dr. Wayne Temple, Archivist

Chamber of Commerce - Don Perry, Chairman Convention & Visitors Committee C of C
Ed Huntley, Corporate Secretary C of C

City of Decatur - James Rupp, Mayor of Decatur

Daughters of Union Veterans - Mrs. Grace Lobdill, Tent #70

Decatur Civil War Round Table - Dale Clifford, Historian
Mr. & Mrs. Flavel Bland

Decatur Genealogical Society - Mrs. Harlin B. Taylor, Editor

Frontiers International, Inc. - Al Dobbins

Gold Star Mothers - Mrs. Iva Michael, Past President

Governor Oglesby Mansion, Inc. - Linley Hurtt, President

Heritage Committee - Amelia Mulrooney, President
Dale Clifford, Vice-President
Webber Borchers, Treasurer Lincoln Statue Fund
Mrs. Earl White
Otto Kyle, Historian
Marguerite Bringer, Secretary
Mildred Price
Kay Wagenseller

Historical Council - Dr. William Hoffmann, Chairman

Historical Society of Macon County - Mrs. Earl White, Vice-President
Mrs. Elsie L. Ruble
Miss Dessie E. Bodemar

Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic - Mrs. Louise Gillispie, President
Mrs. Bert Gober, Chaplain
Mrs. C. H. Rollins, Past President

Lincoln Trails Council BSA - Tom Brown

Mental Health - Leota Walker

Audubon Society - Mr. & Mrs. O. T. Banton

Army Mothers Post #1 - Mrs. Irene Finley, Commander Post I

County Superintendent of Schools - Howard Brown

World War I Auxiliary - Mrs. O. W. Johansen

World War I - Mr. O. W. Johansen

National Society Daughters of the American Revolution
Mrs. James J. Hamm, VP General, NSDAR
Mrs. Wakelee R. Smith, State Regent
Mrs. Robert W. Bills, State Historian
Mrs. Paul G. Meyer, National Flag Chairman
Mrs. Lloyd A. Springer
Mrs. Carl Birk, Regent Stephen Decatur Chapter
Mrs. Darrall M. Abel, Historian
Mrs. John Loftus
Mrs. I. Paul Ellis, Treasurer
Mrs. J. W. Ramsey, 2nd Vice-Regent
Mrs. Leda Rowland, 1st Vice-Regent
Mrs. P. Picknell, State Registrar
Nancy Williams
Mrs. Vivian Schwarze
Mrs. Lorene Thompson
Miss Florence East
Mrs. Grace Relfe
Mrs. Mark O. Roberts
Mrs. Stanley Funk
Mrs. Clyde Fry
Mrs. James Thorp
Mrs. Harold O. Long
Mrs. Brant Hardy, Secretary
Miss Charlotte Ballance
Mr. & Mrs. Milton Hahn
Mrs. Claude Ringo, Regent
Mrs. Mary Lou Stewardson

Mr. I. Paul Ellis

Mr. Jack Powers

Mr. Roy Schilling

Ellis Arnold, Former Mayor

Mr. William Cannon .

Mr. & Mrs. Carl Pemble, Heritage Committee

Table Decorations - Hat worn by Orville Mullis when he impersonated Abe Lincoln
donated to Heritage Committee by Mrs. Henry Novack

Printing - Mrs. Harlin B. Taylor

Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; Psalms, 33:12

DECATUR TRIBUNE

Decatur's
Colorful

Newspaper

2 SECTIONS

Decatur, Illinois, Wednesday, April 15, 1970

Price 10¢

RECORD VOTE DEALS NOW TO CCI PLAN

Wigwam Plaque To Be Dedicated



Webber Borchers of the Heritage Committee, Otto Kyle, historian, and Tony Vestuto, artist, go over the wax model of the proposed Wigwam plaque which will be dedicated July 25. The Heritage Committee commissioned the 16" x 24" plaque by Mr. Vestuto, Professor of Art of Illinois Wesleyan University, which will be sand cast in bronze. It will be placed on the First National Bank's brick entrance wall south of Central Park on the 11th anniversary of the Republican Party's state convention at which Abraham Lincoln was nominated for the Presidency of the U.S.

THE WIGWAM

MAY - 10 - 1860

DECATUR, ILLINOIS

LAND OF THE RAIL SPLITTER - LINCOLN ENDORSED FOR PRESIDENT

HERITAGE COMMITTEE, INC.

DECATUR, ILLINOIS

Asahel E. Reynolds Circle, Ladies of Grand Army of the Republic

DEDICATION OF FLAG AND FLAGPOLE

Saturday, November 28, 1970, 1 P.M.

Lincoln Square-Proposed Lincoln Statue Park Site

Master of Ceremonies	Jack Evans, Honorary Member Reynolds Circle, G.A.R.	
America	Decatur Municipal Band Robert Kruzan, Band Director	
Invocation	Rt. Rev. Msgr. George Powell	
Presentation of Flag to President, Ladies of G.A.R.	Raymond Cunningham, Commander, Post 99 Veterans of Foreign Wars	
Raising of the Flag	R.D. Larrick, Commander, United States Navy	
The National Anthem	Decatur Municipal Band	
Solo	Howard E. Brown, Sup't of Macon County Educational Service Region	
Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag	Boy Scout Troop 121 William Krueger, Scoutmaster	
Dedication Speaker	Louise Gillespie, President Asahel E. Reynolds Circle, Ladies of G.A.R.	
Acceptance for the Heritage Committee	Amelia D. Mulrooney, President Heritage Committee, Inc.	
Introduction of those who made this project possible	Jack Evans	
Acceptance for the City of Decatur	The Honorable Mayor James Rupp	
Benediction	Dr. Laren Spear	
The Ladies of Grand Army of the Republic appreciate the generous contribution of the following:		
Mr. Melvin Closs	Closs Electric	Flag Pole, lighting
Mr. W.R. Stoune	Fisher Stoune Cont.	Excavation & concrete work
Mr. Myrle Wallace	Ornamental IronWorks	Welding
Commander Raymond Cunningham	Post 99, V.F.W.	All Weather Flag

Dedication of Wigwam Site

Where Abraham Lincoln Was Endorsed For The Presidency

Saturday, July 25, 1970, 10:45 A.M.

100 block South Park St., opposite south side of Central Park

Decatur, Illinois

The Heritage Committee, Inc., continuing our Lincoln historical sites marking program, cordially invite you and members of your organization to attend the unveiling and dedication of the bronze Wigwam bas relief, by sculptor Tony Vestuto, and a bronze site marker.

The markers recall one of the most important and exciting events in the early history of Decatur and Macon County and the State of Illinois. Here in the Wigwam, a temporary canvas and wood structure, the Illinois Republican Convention was held May 9-10, 1860. Abraham Lincoln was endorsed for the Presidency and became known as the Railsplitter Candidate. In addition, the Convention also nominated the State officers.

Through the cooperative effort of Stephen Decatur Chapter National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, Heartland Tourism Council of the State of Illinois and The Heritage Committee, Inc. of Decatur and Macon County, another step forward will be realized in honoring our historical past and preserving it for the future.

At 12:00 noon a luncheon (cost \$2.75) will be held in the Ball Room of the Hotel Orlando. Mr. George Cashman, Curator of the Lincoln Tomb in Springfield, Illinois and Lincoln scholar, will be the speaker.

We would appreciate having the name of your representative and office held, as early as possible, so that this information may be included in the program.

*Thought you might like to
see what we are doing
Lincoln-wise*
Amulrooney

Amelia D. Mulrooney, President
620 Standard Office Bldg.
Decatur, Illinois 62523
Tel 428-3461

Please send your reservation or call:

Mrs. J. W. Ramsey
10 Eastmoreland
Decatur, Illinois 62521
Tel 429-4865

I am enclosing my check in the amount of \$ _____ for _____ reservations at \$2.75 each for the Wigwam Celebration luncheon, 12:00 noon, Saturday, July 25, 1970 at the Hotel Orlando.

Reservations must be in by July 23, 1970.



DISCOVER DECATUR, ILLINOIS



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Saturday, July 25, 1970, 10:45 A.M.

100 block South Park St., opposite south side of Central Park

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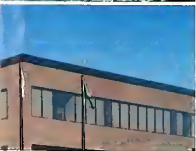
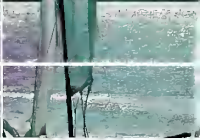
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Reservations must be in by July 23, 1970.



DISCOVER DECATUR, ILLINOIS





Another recreational opportunity comes with the new Civic Center. The 30,000 square foot arena boasts an indoor ice rink, which will be open six months of the year.

Over 2,700 acres in nine tracts of open land are included in the Macon County Conservation District and provide hiking trails, picnic areas and programs for a growing number of nature-lovers. The Rock Springs Center for Environmental Discovery offers year-round recreation on a 1,000 acre site southwest of Decatur along the wooded bluffs overlooking the Sangamon River.



Lake Decatur is a favorite spot for people who enjoy fishing, sailing, boating, water skiing, boat races, and regattas, ice boating and skating in the winter. There are also public picnic areas, a marina, bikeways and camp sites that dot the shore line.

Musicians, actors, orchestras, ballets, operas and musicals play here. . . just as they do in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago. Through the Millikin University Kirkland Fine Art Center, Community Concert Series, Millikin Convocations and Special Attractions, over 25 professional events are scheduled each year.

The Decatur Civic Center will be a new focus for entertainment. It brings to the city a small theater, a gem of a facility, seating 463.

Your tastebuds will not be deprived here. Whether it be the midwest's famous beef, seafood buffets, roast crown of pork or any of the "down home" favorites, you'll find it in Decatur. And, the sophistication of Decatur's dining is growing. There are many different types of restaurants to choose from, each with their own kind of atmosphere. For those who want to go right into evening, some places offer live jazz, magicians and backgammon along with the beer. Or how about a refreshing drink in the Holidome's® Lounge in the Park? Decatur's share of night life ranges from disco to rock, country western or just conversation at some of the more intimate bars.

Shopping

The variety and quality of Decatur's shopping may be one of the area's biggest magnets. The consumer has never had so much selection. Downtown Decatur remains the home of most of the family-owned businesses and services that are the backbone of this community with its Landmark Mall and many unique shopping plazas. Other intriguing spots are Merchant Street and the Franklin Mall.

Annual Events and Tourist Attractions

Whether it be the annual Christmas Parade, the Yesteryear Fair, the Fun Fair, the Art Fair, and the Pumpkin Fest, or the huge celebration of the Fourth

of July, Decatur has an attraction for any age. The Jaycees celebrate Halloween each year with a marvelously spooky Haunted House. Memorial Day Weekend has the Decatur Herald and Review National Championship Inboard Boat Races, February has the Central Illinois Jazz Festival and of course the Macon County Fair and the Illinois State Fair in Springfield are held in the summer.

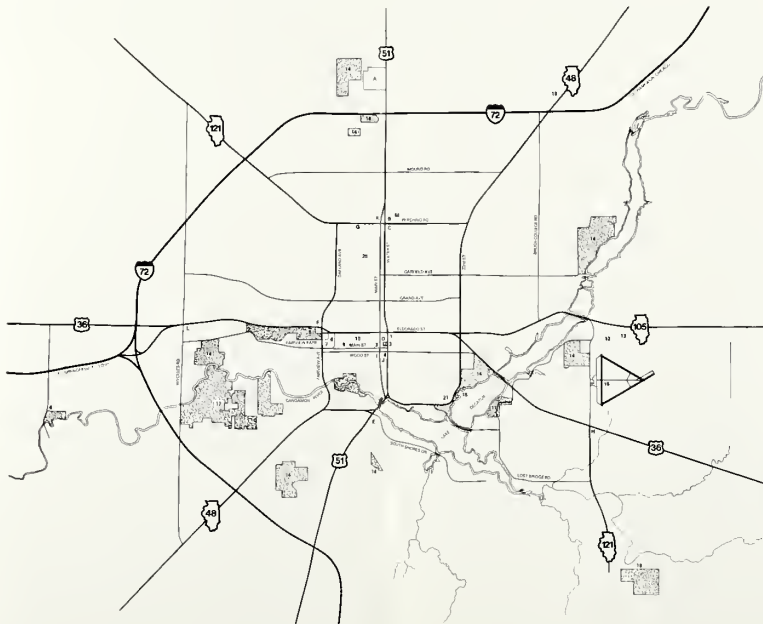
Decatur is known for its famous landmarks as well. The restored James Millikin Homestead, a victorian Mansion, The Oglesby Mansion, Home of Richard J. Oglesby, former U.S. Senator and three time Governor of Illinois, and 80 acres of buildings and land that is listed in the National Register of Historic Sites (including all the architectural styles popular in Illinois between the Civil War and the Great Depression.) A most notable group of homes is in the Millikin Place area.



1. Civic Center
2. Lincoln Square
3. Central Park/Transfer House
4. County Court House
5. Lincoln Court House,
Fairview Park Pavilion & Ice Rink
6. Milikin University
7. Kirkland Fine Arts Center
8. Lincoln Homestead State Park
9. Milikin Homestead
10. Gov. Oglesby Mansion
11. Scovill Park / Children's Zoo
- 12 & 13. Macon County
Museum Complex

14. Golf Courses
15. Nelson Park Marina
16. Decatur Municipal Airport
17. Rock Springs Center
for Environmental Discovery
18. Richland Community College
19. Spitzer Woods State Park
20. Decatur Memorial Hospital
21. St. Mary's Hospital

- A. Hickory Point Mall
- B. Brettwood Village
- C. Northgate Mall
- D. Landmark Mall
- E. South Shores Center
- F. Fairview Plaza
- G. Spring Creek Plaza
- H. K Mart Plaza
- I. Ambassador Hotel
- J. Imperial Inn
- K. Voyager Inn
- L. Holiday Inn Conference Resort
- M. Sheraton Inn



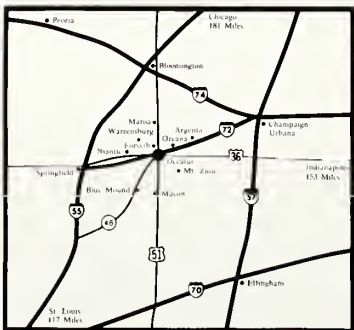


ILLINOIS

Office of Tourism
Department of Commerce and
Community Affairs
printed with state and local funds



100M—5/81





Mister Lincoln's Country

Abe Lincoln, dubbed "The Railsplitter", was endorsed for nomination to the presidency at the Illinois Republican Convention May 9-10, 1860, in Decatur. In 1856 he was responsible for formulating the principles of the Illinois Republican Party at the famous Anti-Nebraska Editor's meeting held in the Cassell House (present St. Nicholas Hotel) in Lincoln Square where the barefoot Lincoln statue stands.

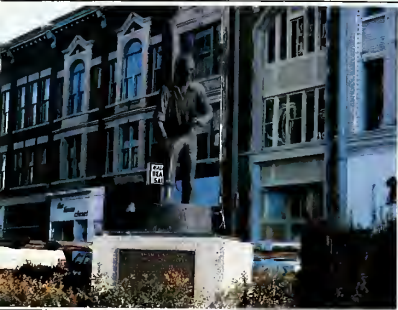
Lincoln's time is evident at Decatur's Macon County Museum Complex where the spirit of the common people of the past is celebrated through changing exhibits and a growing prairie village.

Also close at hand are Spitler Woods and Lincoln Trail Homestead State Parks and Friends Creek County Park, which offers excellent camping facilities.



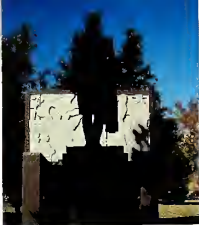
Decatur, einzige Stadt im mittleren Westen, die jährlich die "Nationalen Schnellboot-Rennen" hält. . . die ihr eigenes "Transfer"-Haus vorzeigen kann. . . die mehrere "Frank-Wright-Homes" ihr eigen nennt. . . die die älteste Stadtkapelle der Nation hat. . . und die ein Jazzfestival austrägt, das Musiker und Jazzenthusiasten von den gesamten Vereinigten Staaten zusammenbringt.

Kurz gesagt, Decatur hat seinen eigenen Character durch vielseitige Veranstaltungen und gemeinschaftliche denkende Bewohner.



Decatur – La ciudad que da su nombre al lago donde cada año tiene lugar el Campeonato Nacional de carreras de autobote de motor interior. . . que tiene su propio Transfer House. . . y varias casas diseñadas por Frank Lloyd Wright. Además la banda municipal más vieja del país. . . un festival de jazz al que asisten los músicos y los aficionados de toda la nación. . . y muchas otras atracciones y gente que dan a nuestra ciudad su propio carácter.

Decatur – La seule ville du "Midwest" à avoir un lac qui reçoit chaque année le championnat national des hors bords. . . à sa propre gare routière. . . et plusieurs architectures de "Frank Lloyd Wright". Aussi le plus vieil orchestre municipal des États Unis; un festival de Jazz qui attire musiciens et spectateurs des 4 coins du pays. . . et d'autres manifestations qui donnent à notre ville un caractère unique.



How many midwestern cities have a lake that hosts the National Championship Inboard Boat Races. . . or a historic and unique Transfer House. . . or Frank Lloyd Wright style homes? Some things are "strictly Decatur" like the oldest Municipal band in the country; a Jazz Festival which draws musicians and fans from across the nation. . . events, and people, that give a unique character to our city.

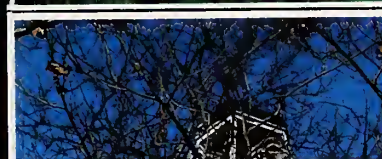
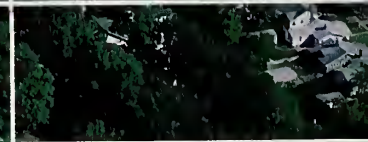
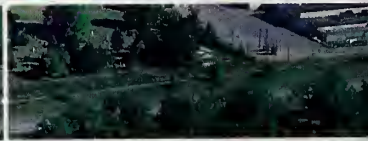
Golf, swimming, tennis, ice skating, cross-country, with over 2,000 acres of land offering one of the highest ratios of parkland acreage per capita in the nation. The 57 parks and playgrounds each have their own personality, from the small neighborhood center with playground equipment, pavillion and ball diamond to the 191 acres of Fairview Park, with all facilities for any activity imaginable. Scovill Gardens contains the Oriental garden, flower gardens and Scovill Farm, a children's zoo. The zoo is open daily (except Monday) early spring to late fall from 1:00 p.m.

to 8:00 or 8:30 p.m. depending upon the daylight hours. A leader is available for guided tours for school children during weekday mornings.

The fine facilities of the Park District are complemented by private resources which include: two new racquet-ball clubs, seven bowling alleys, two modern roller rinks, four public golf courses, one par three course, one miniature golf course, and in Borg Warner Field the finest softball and soccer facilities in the midwest.







State's Lincoln curator coming to Decatur to lead local effort to promote the 16th president

By MIKE FRAZIER - H&R Staff Writer

DECATUR - The state's Abraham Lincoln curator will soon lead efforts to promote Honest Abe's heritage in Decatur.

Decatur resident Kim Bauer will serve as director of the city's Lincoln heritage project, pending appointment by City Manager Steve Garman.

The Decatur City Council on Monday voted unanimously to create the position, and Bauer has agreed to oversee the Lincoln initiative in Decatur.

Bauer said Monday he would resign from his Springfield post to spearhead Lincoln efforts in Decatur.

Bauer's \$67,000 salary would come from hotel and motel tax funds collected in recent years. Those funds are gained largely from visitors to Decatur and not local taxpayers, Garman said.

The city council in recent weeks approved for the new fiscal year budget about \$744,000 in hotel and motel tax funds to go toward Lincoln Heritage and Looking for Lincoln initiatives.

City leaders agree time is of the essence in promoting the community's Lincoln heritage. Celebrations will be held across the state and nation in 2009 to mark Lincoln's 200th birthday. Bauer's position is expected to be terminated the same fiscal year.

Mayor Paul Osborne said the city has in Bauer a "golden opportunity" to capitalize on its Lincoln heritage.

Bauer did not reveal possible plans on Monday but said ideas to promote Lincoln's ties in the region would "stand the test of time" long after the bicentennial celebration in 2009.

"I feel very, very strongly that the city of Decatur has a wonderful heritage to be able to offer not only to the state but the nation and internationally," Bauer said.

Bauer last year voiced strong support for a plan by Osborne to tout downtown's Lincoln connections and move the 150-ton Transfer House to the center of Main and Main streets, commonly known as Lincoln Square.

The Illinois Department of Transportation nixed plans to move the city symbol, but efforts continue to market the community's Lincoln connections. Lincoln's footprints are all over downtown Decatur, advocates say.

In downtown Decatur, Lincoln practiced law, is believed to have given his first political speech, was dubbed the Railsplitter and was nominated for president.

Bauer last year estimated the community could "easily hit" 120,000 visitors per year if it markets effectively its Lincoln heritage.

"I truly, truly do believe that we will easily," Bauer said last year. "I'll put my reputation on it."

Mike Frazier can be reached at mfrazier@herald-review.com or 421-7985.

Gov. Oglesby mansion reminder of Decatur's prominence in Lincoln story

By MARY TALLON - H&R Staff Writer

DECATUR - In the painstakingly refurbished Oglesby Mansion, almost lost amid the lavish Victorian-era interior design, ornate wood floors and intricate furniture, hangs a portrait of Abraham Lincoln on the second-floor wall.

The picture is the home's only visual reminder of the friendship between the 16th president and the home's former owner, Gov. Richard Oglesby, but the self-made men shared much in common.

Both rose to prominence despite little formal schooling and were self-taught lawyers. Both were charismatic speakers who excelled at networking, and both benefited politically from the other.

Oglesby is credited with coining the slogan "Abraham Lincoln - the Rail-Splitter Candidate" when Illinois Republicans gathered in Decatur to name him their pick for president in 1860, eventually catapulting him to victory in the national election.

Lincoln repaid the political favor by finding Oglesby a job in his administration after he finished serving in the Civil War. The president later urged Oglesby to run for Illinois governor in 1864, and that year both men won.

When the president was killed, Oglesby raised funds for the construction of Lincoln's tomb and spoke at its dedication.

Local tourism boosters and mansion volunteers are optimistic that getting more people to understand Oglesby's connection to Lincoln, and all Decatur's Lincoln connections, could increase attendance at the site as more tourists pass through Central Illinois to visit the year-old Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

That hope was the impetus for the decision by the mansion's board to increase the number of hours the entirely volunteer-run site is open this summer as its supporters celebrate the 30th anniversary of the home's restoration.

The mansion is now open every Wednesday and Saturday through August from 1 to 4 p.m. The mansion had only been open on the last Sunday of the month from 2 to 4 p.m.

"The mansion is a major, major attraction, but you can only be an attraction if you're open," said Denene Wilmeth, executive director of the Decatur Area Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Wilmeth said she hopes visitors take advantage of the mansion enough that it can increase its hours of operation as Decatur officials try to spotlight the area's Lincoln ties.

Betty Watkins, president of the mansion board, said attendance during the expanded hours hasn't been overwhelming, but it takes time for people to notice the additional hours. She said it is likely the mansion will discontinue its Wednesday hours when summer ends but may keep the additional Saturday hours.

"It's been slow," Watkins said. "I mean it would be foolish to call it anything else when we were open nine days in June and altogether we had 52 (visitors)."

She said the mansion has a more difficult time operating and marketing itself than sites such as the similar David Davis Mansion in Bloomington, which is also a restored home of a Lincoln friend. Because the David Davis Mansion is a state historic site, it receives government support and can hire paid staff.

The Oglesby Mansion, on the other hand, is owned by the Macon County Conservation District but operated by

volunteers and funded through donor support.

Officials who work at the David Davis Mansion said they have been able to increase attendance there by about 11 percent by changing the site's focus last year to capitalize on the Davis-Lincoln connection.

"What we've done is to give a different kind of look at Abraham Lincoln through the eyes of fairly wealthy residents of Central Illinois, who were part of the network of friends who helped Lincoln rise to the political promise he achieved," said Marcia Young, site manager.

Young said the home now provides more than just a display of what homes and lives of that time period were like, but also gets people thinking about how homes and lifestyles affected an individual's social and political success.

Oglesby Mansion volunteers hope that people come away with that same understanding when visiting the home and considering Oglesby's varied and exciting life - one that included service in the war with Mexico and the Civil War, success in the California gold rush, a political career spanning four decades and friendships with Lincoln and President Ulysses S. Grant of Galena, who rose to prominence as a Civil War general.

"From about 1860 on, for the rest of the 1800s, there was not a single major event in this country that Oglesby was not consulted on," said Dick Torgerson, mansion volunteer and Oglesby impersonator.

Mary Tallon can be reached at mtallon@herald-review.com or 421-7984.

Transfer House restoration progress offers hope it could be Lincoln focal point

By MIKE FRAZIER - H&R Staff Writer

DECATUR - A spruced-up Transfer House would be the ideal starting point for a downtown tour of Abraham Lincoln sites, Mayor Paul Osborne said.

Efforts continue to restore the city symbol to its historical glory.

The city council earlier this year approved spending up to \$482,600 for Otto Baum Co. Inc. to restore the exterior, and the mayor would like to see the Central Park landmark fashioned into a tourist information center.

"What better place to start a downtown tour of Decatur than in a building that is historically significant to Decatur?" Osborne said. "It's the icon of Decatur."

Any future use would require the authorization of a majority of members of the council, Osborne said.

"But I've made no secret that that's what I really feel it should be used for," Osborne said.

The restoration project is expected to be complete before the end of August. Partition walls inside the structure are being knocked down.

Renovations will include the roof, ornamental spire, windows, doors, stone masonry, stone benches and exterior lighting.

"They have most of the interior demolition taken care of," said Greg Crowe, economic development coordinator for the city. "They have the old roof taken off and have that covered with felt, ready for the new roof."

Architects have been in constant contact with the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, Crowe said.

"The Transfer House is on the National Register of Historic Places," Crowe said. "It's important to maintain its historical character."

Construction of the Transfer House was completed in 1896, and for decades, the structure served as a station for streetcars and buses at the corner of Main and Main streets, commonly called Lincoln Square.

The move came in 1962. The Transfer House was rolled four blocks to its home in Central Park.

Osborne proposed in recent years moving the Transfer House back to Lincoln Square to serve as the center of downtown Lincoln attractions.

But the Illinois Department of Transportation in 2005 nixed the plan, citing "significant risks" for safety and traffic flow downtown.

The Transfer House can serve the same function as a tourist center at Central Park, Osborne said.

"The first choice was Lincoln Square, but the second choice should serve the same purpose," Osborne said.

The city's trolleys possibly could transport tourists to Lincoln sites outside the downtown area, such as the Gov. Richard Oglesby mansion on West William Street or the Lincoln statue on the Millikin University campus, Osborne said.

A downtown walking tour will allow tourists to understand the city's deep connections with Lincoln, Osborne said.

In downtown Decatur, Lincoln practiced law, delivered his first political speech and was nominated for president at the 1860 state Republican Convention.

The Grand Army of the Republic, a fraternal organization of Union veterans of the Civil War, also was formed in Central Park.

The Transfer House could house important Lincoln artifacts and historical pieces and provide maps to other area tourist attractions, such as the Children's Museum of Illinois and Scovill Zoo.

"It could be a focal point for Abraham Lincoln and a lot of other attractions we have," Osborne said.

Mike Frazier can be reached at mfrazier@herald-review.com or 421-7985.

HISTORICAL SITES & STATUES IN DECATUR

1. Lincoln Log Cabin Court House
2. Lincoln Homestead & Cemetery Site
3. Wigwag Site in Central Park
4. Gov. Richard Oglesby's Home
5. Lincoln Statue in Lincoln Square
6. Lincoln Statue on Millikin Campus
7. Lincoln Statue in Lincoln Square
8. Jones Elementary School
9. Homick Cabin or 7 Mile House
10. James Millikin Home

POINTS OF INTEREST IN DECATUR

11. Decatur Municipal Bldg.
12. Franklin Mall
13. Landmark Mall
14. Macon County Museum
15. Millikin University
16. ADM Int'l Headquarters
17. A. E. Stealey Mfg. Co.
18. Caterpillar Tractor Co.
19. Inland Manufacturing Co.
20. Transfer House

FUN SPOTS IN DECATUR

21. Children's Zoo in Sewell Park
22. Watson Park & Swimming Pool
23. Fairview Park & Swimming Pool
24. Lake Decatur Boat Dock
25. Sewell Woods Camp Site
26. Jayland Amusement Park
27. Fane Field Ball Park



Map of Decatur, Ill., sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, Conventions & Visitors Committee and the Tourism Division of the Dept. of Business & Economic Development of the State of Illinois.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
P.O. Box 1031 250 N. Water St.
Decatur, Illinois 62525



Q - Who is the sculptor of the boy-orator statue of Lincoln in Lincoln Square and what organizations raised money for the project ?
I believe I gave Borchers a \$10 bill.
A -- Antonio Vestuto
Assistant part of art at Lincoln University
Money raised by Orator Heritage Committee.

----- Boris
Q --Who provided the funds for the Lovet-Lorski statue in front of the County Building ? what was or is Lovet Lorski's background ?
A -- Mr. & Mrs. Roy Dawson gave the gift.
Lovet-Lorski native of Lithuania & studied art in Russia before moving to U.S. in 1916. He was nationally recognized & did statue unveiled Sept. 8, 1941. books of procedure & other materials.

Q --I believe you checked for me and found that the plaque is missing from the Wabash ~~Stn~~ Depot. True or false.
A -- TRUE

Q --Is Wigwam plaque back of Millikin Bank Building affixed to that building ?
A -- YES.

(9-1841-1840)

Q --Otto Kyle says Lincoln's name does not appear in Macon County records for a period of 20 years ? What records are left in county files, and did Ida M. Tarbell keep some of them, until she gave them to alma mater, Allegheney College ?
A == See add

Q --I seem to recall that the "Lincoln courthouse" stood on a hill near the tennis courts in Fairview park when I came to town. Was it located anywhere else before it was given its present setting ?

A -- Yes this was only a replica. The original was lost at sea when enroute for public display in England. The replica was immediately new and of tennis courts. Had been on hill near Niantic.

Q --Are any other significant new Lincoln projects under way in Decatur, aside from continuing perfection of Homestead park restoration ?
A -- This has been completed.

===sure, I still have some copy paper

Q --Does Public Library still have that original Lincoln photograph ?
A -- Yes. But not displayed.

Q whatever happened to the Kirkland grammar ? Is it in Washington, possibly Library of Congress ? Once it was in DPL .

Kirkham Grammar was given to Library of Congress.

Decatur

Receive Red Carpet Treatment In Decatur, Illinois

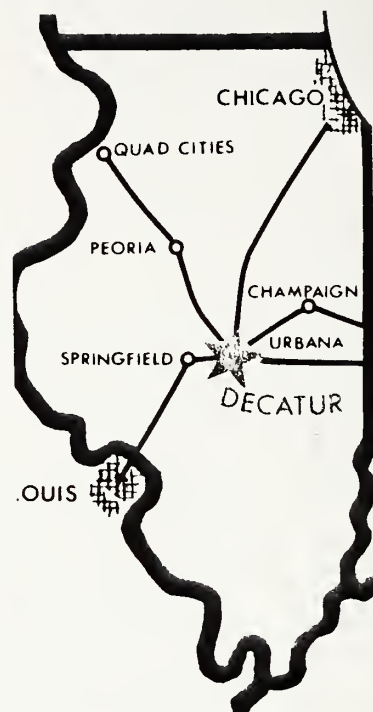
DECATUR . . . a friendly moderate-sized city in the center of Illinois, offers your group ideal facilities for conventions from 2 to 2,000 people. Over 1,400 modern hotel and motel rooms await you. There are large meeting and banquet rooms for your special needs. Decatur's "Red Carpet" treatment includes 6,000 convenient parking spaces for conventioners and entertainment ranging from outdoor sports to legitimate theater and dancing. For the wives, our staff of gracious women guides will arrange escorted visits to historical sites, unusual industries and smart shopping areas. Decatur extends to you convenience, warmth and pleasure at one of the lowest per diem rates in Illinois. Let us help you make your arrangements for your next convention or meeting.

YOU'LL LIKE DECATUR . . .

IT'S A LIKEABLE TOWN

It's Lake Decatur and Lake Shore Drive . . . the legend of Lincoln . . . Fairview and Nelson Parks . . . Millikin University and 46 schools . . . it's airplanes and trucks and boxcars and grain mills . . . it's a city of citizen interest and interesting citizens . . . some 90,000 people who live work and enjoy themselves in a new kind of hometown . . . where smalltown friendliness is spiced with the vitality of a city on the move.

In 1830 a pioneer family named Lincoln stopped here. Abe practiced law in a log courthouse still preserved. He received the Illinois Republicans' endorsement for the 1860 Presidential nomination here and made Decatur rich in the Lincoln legend.



Decatur, Illinois Antique Show and Sale

May 13 — 14, 1972

Saturday May 13

11 A.M. — 10 P.M.

Sunday May 14

11 A.M. — 6 P.M.

in beautiful

Masonic Temple

224 W. William St.

Commodious showrooms

Authentic Antiques

Ample Parking

Admission \$1.00

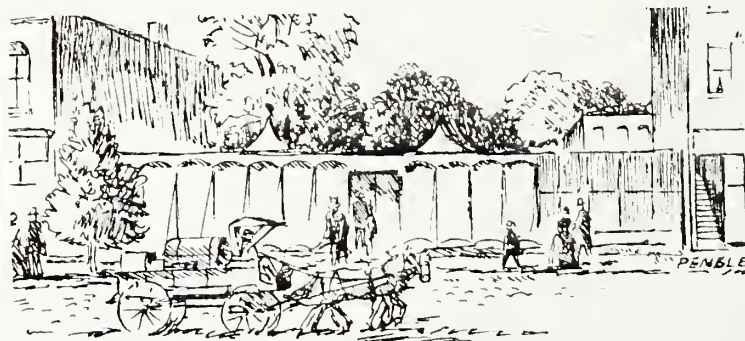
Sponsored by the

Macon County

Historical Society

1736 North Main St.

Decatur, Illinois 62526



THE WIGWAM

Lincoln received his greatest acclaim in Macon County on May 10, 1860 when the state Republican party, holding its convention in the Wigwam on State street, endorsed him as the native son candidate for the presidency. His nomination came a short time later at the national convention in Chicago at another structure also named the Wigwam after that one in Decatur.

Newly organized Community College of Decatur Academic & Vocational Training

If Interested Call

1-217-422-8387

or Write

560 Citizens Bldg.

250 North Water St.

Decatur, Illinois



MACON COUNTY'S FIRST COURT HOUSE

One of the problems confronting the city fathers of Decatur was the fact that they held the authority for a county organization but had no place to house it. Holding court sessions in blacksmith shops and in the Ward home was not a fit setting for a new seat of government.

Fired with enthusiasm for the project, male citizens of the sprawling town began cutting tim-

bers for the new courthouse in the fall of 1829. Slowed down by the winter months, work was resumed in the spring of 1830. Records are not clear as to the progress of the building outside of the fact that John Hanks was paid \$9.87 1/2 for chinking and daubing, and Luther Hunting \$8 for expenses for laying the floor. In September, 1831, Isaac Pugh needed \$2.37 1/2 for glass for

the windows. By the April term of 1832 James Johnson completed the building, except for the chimney, at a cost of \$286.60. It stood on the southwest corner of Lincoln square, a story and a half log building, resplendent with clapboard roof and puncheon floor. The chimney was later completed when funds became available.



Tradition has it that the young Lincoln, who was working in a field for a Mr. Shepherd, hearing a commotion emanating from the Decatur public square, left his plowing and went to see what was going on. On his arrival he found a political speaker making a bombastic ranting speech denouncing the old Whig Party. When the speaker had finished his harangue, Lincoln, thoroughly angered by what he had heard, mounted the stump and lambasted the speaker and denied the allegations which has been made against the Whigs. When he finished the crowd cheered, Lincoln has scored for the Whigs, and impressed his listeners with his ability.



THE LINCOLN'S FIRST ILLINOIS HOME 1830-1831.



Stephen Decatur



IN THIS SQUARE, WHICH BEARS HIS NAME, ABRAHAM LINCOLN, THE YOUTH, PAUSED IN THE SPRING OF 1830 ON HIS JOURNEY FROM INDIANA INTO MACON COUNTY, WHICH WAS TO BE HIS FIRST HOME IN ILLINOIS. HERE IN CIRCUIT RIDER DAYS HE PRACTICED LAW

THIS TABLET PLACED BY THE PEOPLE OF MACON COUNTY, MAY 3, 1915 IN OBSERVANCE OF THE CENTENNIAL OF THE STATEHOOD OF ILLINOIS

